

E S S A Y S,
M O R A L,
R E L I G I O U S,
A N D
M I S C E L L A N E O U S.

TO WHICH IS ADDED,
A PROSE TRANSLATION
Of Mr. BROWNE'S LATIN POEM,
De Animi Immortalitate.

By J. H.
IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

L O N D O N,

Printed for B. WHITE, at *Horace's Head*, in *Fleet-*
street; and J. WALTER, at *Charing-Cross*.

MDCCLXVI.

E. S. A. Y. S.

M. O. R. A. L.

R. E. L. I. G. I. O. U. S.

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Printed for E. Wright, at Newman's Head in Pall Mall; and J. Wright, at Clarendon Street.

MDCCLXVI.

Advertisement.

The following Essays are collected
from a considerable number,
written at different periods of
life, as hours of leisure, from
the business of a profession,
afforded opportunities.

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RELIGIOUS, MORAL,

AND

CRITICAL ESSAYS.

On TRUTH.

WHETHER Truth ought absolutely, on all occasions, and at all hazards, to be strictly observed? Or whether it should be left to the discretion of every one to speak truth or falshood, as he judges best with respect to consequences?

Whoever takes the former to be right, does so because he sees or be-

VOL. I.

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lieves

believes that the good of the whole is most effectually promoted and preserved by it; notwithstanding it may happen in some instances to be productive of particular and temporary evil.

Whoever takes the latter to be justifiable, does so, because he apprehends that more good, upon the whole, is promoted and preserved, or evil avoided, by such liberty, than by an uniform, invariable attachment to Truth.

And since a view to Good, general, or rather universal, Good, is a principle to which all is to be referred, and in which both parties will agree, let us examine the question on this principle, taking into our consideration the most distant (as well as the more immediate) consequences, that is, such as respect the whole of our existence.

Now

Now all mankind, in all nations and ages, have acted, or pretended to act, on the principle of Truth, as the grand and fundamental rule of intercourse and commerce with one another; nor have they ever dared to profess the contrary; but if falsehood has at any time been practised, it has always been under the guise of Truth: otherwise, the effects expected from it would be unavoidably frustrated; and so necessary is the appearance at least of Truth, that on the reputation of it depends the very success of deceit.

Children, and all innocent persons, speak Truth as if by instinct; it seems natural, and certainly is so; nor do they act otherwise till corrupted by bad examples; till they have been deceived by others, or seen others practise de-

'ceit, or are instigated by hope or fear : and then, with what reluctance, difficulty, and awkwardness, is the first lye pronounced ? What uneasy sensations accompany, and reflections follow it ? There is something in it so repugnant to the natural rectitude of the human heart, that one may reasonably suppose many have passed their lives without ever having been guilty of a wilful, premeditated falsehood.

Every one expects to be believed in whatever he asserts : hence the indignity (not to be pardoned) of being charged with a lye.—And in like manner everyone expects Truth from others, and very justly thinks himself ill-treated when deceived ; insomuch that it may be questioned whether the most strenuous defender of this liberty does not mean

mean to reserve it to himself alone, at the same time that he would be much offended with those who should deceive him, especially in an affair that nearly concerns him, and in regard to which he had discovered great solicitude and anxiety ; tho' such as these are the very cases wherein it is pretended that deceit may be prudent and justifiable.

Truth is the foundation of that mutual confidence so essential to the well-being of Society, and without it there would be nothing but continual distrust, jealousy, and hatred among men ; it is the band of community.

Our minds are formed to approve and to presume upon it, in all our dealings with one another, where we have not experienced the contrary ; or till we have been so often deceived as

to incline us to general suspicion ; which will be acknowledged to be so miserable a situation as that from this very acknowledgment will arise an encomium to the honour of Truth, whose consequences are so much more eligible.

There is in the breast of him who preserves his integrity a self-approbation, a noble consciousness, which renders him superior to the fears and apprehensions of any consequences ; whereas the liar has a very different feeling within, and cannot wholly divest himself of the dread of being detected, and even finds himself below the meanest on whom he has endeavoured to impose, in case of a discovery.

With this liberty of using Truth or falsehood at discretion, as an avowed principle, among men of virtue (for
the

the dispute is between such) we could not depend on our best friends, who might, out of tenderness or prudence, deceive us, by denying disagreeable truths, or such as, in their opinion, might insure our health, or tranquillity; and after a few such instances discovered, these persons would no more be believed, especially in the most interesting cases: whereas if it were a received maxim that it is inconsistent with virtue to deceive in any case, we should place entire confidence in every good man at least, and should rest satisfied in whatever he asserted.

Besides, if it be allowed to the wise and prudent, it must also to the weak and foolish, to act on the same maxim, who may do as much mischief, as the others hope to do good, by this licence;

or who is to make the distinction between the wise and foolish? Whereas if Truth be indiscriminately taught as the only rule of all, this partial evil will also be avoided.

Again; if it be granted that whatever is, is right, whosoever speaks falsely, denies that to be true which is true, to be right which is right.

The general sense of mankind has been sufficiently illustrated, on this point, in the many martyrdoms to all Religions, not only by the martyrs themselves, but also by their persecutors; for as the former thought themselves in conscience bound to seal the Truth with their blood rather than save their lives by denying it, so the latter have made use of this cruel and unjust means, as the last argument to bring them,
over

over to what they in general as firmly believed to be the Truth, and for which some of them have also suffered in their turn. Now though different and contrary tenets could not be equally true, that affects not this reasoning ; for it is not abstract Truth, as such, that is the subject of our debate, or which is to be maintained by us, but moral Truth, or what we believe to be such ; it is our veracity and sincerity that we are to maintain at all hazards, and never to profess to believe what we do not believe.

This the Christian Religion absolutely requires, and it is to be presumed all other religions enjoin the same.

All governments have thought it necessary to require this, and to depend on oaths for their security, which would
be

be none, if good men thought themselves at liberty to swear or promise any thing without regard to Truth, or contrary to it, or with intention to break such oaths and promises; and every honest man will think himself bound by his word or promise as truly as by his oath.

It will not be at all to the purpose, to alledge how lightly some have set by their oaths of this, or of any other kind; the appeal is here made to men of probity and conscience.

After all, it will be urged, by those who contend for the latitude disputed, that they insist on a general regard to Truth as well as we; but that they suppose some extraordinary cases may be excepted from the general rule, and particularly such as follow: these therefore shall be fairly examined. And

And first, the case of a physician, with his patient, may be proposed. — He, out of prudence or tenderness, conceals his real sentiments of the case from his patient, though urged and conjured by him in the strongest manner, and endeavours to make him believe himself much better than he really is ; and the rather, as the opinion of the patient may possibly contribute to his recovery, at least to his present tranquillity, while the physician perhaps has little, or no hopes. Now if the patient believes him, it is owing to the opinion he has of the physician's veracity, which, if forfeited before, would now be suspected, and his assurances ineffectual ; this shews the necessity of his having formerly acted on the principles of Truth, so that falsehood

can be of no use but on the reputation of veracity, and will serve but once, whereas Truth serves for ever the same. If, on the contrary, he is not believed, as he would not were it an avowed principle with the virtuous to preserve or quit Truth at pleasure, the good he might propose would be entirely frustrated; and (which is still worse) even though he spoke his real sentiments; for Truth itself loses its genuine efficacy by the admission of this maxim, because there remains no criterion to distinguish it from falsehood; besides, it is highly probable that for his own sake, and reputation, as a skilful man, he would give his real sentiments to those about the patient, lest he should die, when he had declared there was no danger. And thus, in preserving the
repu-

reputation of his skill, he would (even with them) forfeit that of his veracity, and these would never believe him again, on a like occasion ; so that for one temporary advantage obtained, if it be such, which however is not granted, many lasting disadvantages would be incurred.

The manner of treating children may serve as another instance. It is presumed, that they cannot be educated, nor managed, without some deceit ; it may be necessary to give a child physic, in order to which, it is offered as food, or perhaps as something still more pleasant, to allure it. Very well ; the child, on taking it, finds it unpleasant, and different from what was pretended ; the consequence is, that he don't believe you next time ; however,

the

the dose returns; and you will then find it necessary to own the truth; and then to persuade him that it is for his good, or if that will not do, must use authority, or perhaps force; if persuasion will answer the purpose now, it would have done so the first time; or whatever method must now be used, might have better served then, for these reasons; 1. That deceit will answer the purpose but once, as hath been observed; 2. That by it you forfeit your credit with the child, who will afterwards suspect even food, or other things, on certain occasions, to be physic; at least will not confide in you, knowing you make no scruple of deceiving; and 3. The child is hereby taught to deceive you, for one of these reasons; either having a good opinion of you notwithstanding, believes

believes it no crime, since you act thus ; or if he conceives a dislike, and entertains a bad opinion of you, will however think he may deceive you, who have deceived him ; besides all this, if the child has sense (and many have it earlier than is imagined) he must hate, or despise a person who treats him with so much contempt. Wherefore when persuasion, for his own good, fails, (which seldom would) if then authority, or even force, were used, he would much more easily forgive that, and be reconciled to the person who first offered arguments, and appeared to be convinced of the necessity of force, before used, and would hereby be taught to reverence Truth.

Another instance may be proposed of a person met by ruffians, who, intending

tending to murder his father, friend, &c. require him to promise, or swear, not to discover such their intention, nor to prevent the person from going where he must necessarily fall into their hands. It may be urged that, in this case, the life of his father &c. as well as his own, is in danger if he refuses; but if he complies, he first secures his own, and is thereby enabled to secure that of his father, &c. and in lying, or swearing falsely, he only deceives villains, who have no right to the Truth. Now for the preservation of life, all lawful and honourable means are to be employed; but as death is inevitable, at one period absolutely, at another conditionally; and as in the former, no means can prevent it, so in the latter no dishonourable

or

or unlawful means ought to be employed, a wise and good man should resign himself to whatever happens, even to death itself, when he sees it cannot be avoided but on condition of forfeiting his virtue and integrity, with the same determination and resolution as when it approaches absolutely, and without condition ; in either case, his time is come, and he who preserves his conscience unstained to the last, dies happily, whether sooner or later ; but he who prolongs his life by base, unworthy, and wicked means, only renders such remainder miserable, at best, besides what may be apprehended hereafter ; therefore he ought not to swear or promise, be the consequence what it will, but either fly, if he can, or de-

send himself, or take his fate, since he must part with his life, or his virtue.

And as to the other argument, that these ruffians have no right to Truth, it is granted; but it can never follow from hence, that we may swear what we do not intend to perform; for this would be owning their right to Truth in the first instance, and then defrauding them of that acknowledged right; nor would they (even such men as these) require, or depend upon an oath, if they, as well as the rest of the world, did not esteem it an obligation that no good man would dare to violate; so that when honestly given, and for the best purposes, it would fail of the effect it ought to have, if this principle be admitted: it is not therefore for the sake of these people, or any right that they can

can claim, but for our own sakes, and for that of Truth itself, and the valuable effects of it, that we dare not be guilty of perjury.

Suppose a man demands of me a sum of money which I do not owe him; am I to behave as acknowledging the debt, and then pay him in counters, or false money? Or should I not tell him that he has no right to the demand he makes, and therefore I will not pay him? In the former case, when he discovers the false money, he may say, I owned the debt in pretending to pay him, and then cheated him; in the latter, I behave like a man of probity, and without reproach.

Again; if it should be argued, that Truth is to be considered as a means only, in order to an end, which end is

Good, and that therefore when it would frustrate, rather than promote that end, it might be dispensed with, and Falshood be substituted in its place, as conducive to the same end, Good ; if this were granted, it must be on condition that no other consequences could follow, from such falshood, but those of this single case, in which it is used ; whereas, in fact, the affair does not end here, but for one such occasional and temporary advantage, there may be a thousand lasting disadvantages ; among which it should be particularly considered, that a man may lose his credit ever after, and in cases even of greater importance than that, for the sake of which he quitted Truth, and thenceforward be disqualified to procure to himself, or others, any benefit either by
 Truth,

Truth, or Deceit ; by Truth, because he is known to impose falshood in its stead ; by deceit, because that can never succeed but on the reputation of Truth, which he has already forfeited ; the question not being, whether on certain occasions some good may not possibly be procured, and some evil avoided, by falshood, but whether, for the sake of such casual advantages, it ought to be allowed as a maxim, that we may dispense with Truth whenever we conceive it best so to do ? Or whether the contrary maxim, that we ought never, on any occasion whatsoever to depart from Truth, would not produce greater and more constant good.

The last instance, and perhaps as extraordinary as can be proposed, shall be that of a Bond for a large sum of money,

money, forged, witnessed by persons suborned for the purpose, and which (according to law) will be proved in due form, and must be paid, unless the defendant will suborn other witnesses to swear that they saw it discharged, producing a legal release, in as authentic a form as the pretended bond ; which, in this case, is supposed to be the only possible way of securing one's self against such a fraud ; and suppose the defendant obliged to swear all this himself, in a solemn manner, as well as the witnesses, or suffer the loss of his money. The whole of a man's substance may be thus torn from him, for which he may have been labouring all his life, now become incapable, and a family, whose dependence is on this very fortune, with him utterly ruined by it.

If,

If, by mistake, such case be in any respect misrepresented, that will not however affect the reasoning, nor will it be pertinent to suggest other methods of recovering; it must be taken as stated, for the sake of the argument, and the conduct of a good man determined upon it.

In order to decide, without prejudice, the best method will be to consider what may be offered on both sides.

And first, it may be urged, that since the only reason why Truth is to be maintained, is to procure and preserve good, and to prevent evil; and in the foregoing arguments on the side of Truth, it was found necessary, in order to establish it, to shew, that, by quitting Truth, more advantages were lost, than gained; confessing thereby, that if, on the con-

trary, more good could be really produced, it would be right to prefer falsehood; and especially if such bad consequences as are there mentioned could be avoided: Now here the falsehood is not begun by the injured party, but afterwards used by him, as being the sole means left to defend himself against the falsehood, and the wicked design of his adversary; it is turning his own weapon against him, and the only one that can secure the innocent.

Murder is esteemed the greatest of all crimes, but no one ever thought it criminal to kill another in his own defence; wholesome food is a proper constant nourishment, but poison is sometimes necessary, especially to expel poison: this however is by no means recommending it to common practice; and if
the

the method above justified be pursued in so extraordinary a case, and such like, in one's own defence only, the precedent will, it may be said, produce no great mischief. Will any one, who afterwards should be acquainted with a transaction of this nature, put less confidence in us, or suspect our veracity in other cases? will any one apprehend himself in danger from an innocent man, because he had killed a highwayman when attacked by him? Besides, a contrary conduct (being supposed necessary) would always subject the best to the worst of men, who would not fail to take all advantages of this delicate regard to strict literal Truth. The good that a virtuous man pursues, should be that of the whole community, as far as in him lies, and not a separate personal good to the
prejudice

prejudice of society; the question then will be, by which conduct that general good would be most effectually advanced? By such scrupulous attachment to literal Truth, every honest man is liable to be ruined, in like circumstances; by the contrary, he is preserved: the only difficulty is with regard to the sacredness and obligation of oaths, which are hereby violated; no testimonies to matters of fact can be relied on, if this conduct be justified: it is acknowledged, oaths to mere matters of fact cannot be depended on, if this liberty be taken; but what will be the consequence? only that circumstances, which are *in ordine ad*, must, as they ought, give way to the end, for the sake of which they are produced, for the literal Truth of circumstances is sought only

only to do right, which is the end, and which in this, and such cases cannot otherwise be secured; nay the real, substantial Truth of things is established by it, for our adversaries allegations are false, and the property in contest is really ours, and all our evidence tends to prove this Truth only, and without it we neglect supporting the Truth of things, when wickedly attacked; in short, it procures that end for the sake of which, only, Truth is preferable to falsehood.

Again, all human laws are defective; this conduct, in the present case, supplies such defect, and answers the end intended by the law, and which a court of judicature is erected to procure; and without which conduct, this court must, according

according to its forms, determine against the very end, for which it is established.

It must be confessed, that there is something very plausible and specious in this kind of reasoning; and on so extraordinary an occasion, some allowance is to be made for the byas, that a man's interest naturally gives him, especially if such interest be considerable; it must also be allowed, that the end proposed is in itself laudable, and worthy a good man, viz. to frustrate the wicked machinations of such miscreants, and to rescue our invaded property; but the question will be, whether such end will justify any means, and particularly the violating so sacred an obligation as that of an oath, and the subornation of perjury?

An

An oath is the last resource in a court of justice or equity, and finally rested on, in all cases, where it cannot be proved to be false; without it, many the most important and interesting Truths would remain undiscovered, and not only the just rights, but also the lives, of the innocent would want one principal security; and it has been therefore held sacred in all countries and ages. A man calls God to witness in the most solemn manner, before a respectable audience, that what he avers, is true; and imprecates his vengeance if it be false; a good man would certainly find great difficulty in persuading himself to swear in so awful a manner to a known, premeditated, contrived lye; he must do great violence to his own mind, it would be with the utmost reluctance

luctance, if, at last, he were able to prevail on himself.

And notwithstanding the distinction made between literal Truth and the substantial Truth of things, let it be remarked, that it is the latter which the court is made to believe, by positive, direct perjury, (and which the adverse party knows) so that *True* and *False* are utterly confounded; for the last and strongest testimony which can be offered in proof of what is really true, is here employed in proof of what is really false; and nothing can so effectually destroy all the use, excellence, and advantageous consequences of Truth, as the affording to falshood the same support, in its utmost extent, and thereby leaving no criterion to distinguish them.

But

But farther, in this case he must either find persons ready to swear any falsehood, and then employ them for his purpose, which is abetting, encouraging, and increasing the evil of which he complains, by which he is injured, and without which he could not be put to this difficulty ; or else he must prevail on such who have never yet been thus employed, to take upon them this office, on his account : and here it may be asked, would he be a false witness for another in a like case ? If not, with what face, and a pretence to virtue, could he ask it of another ? Besides, he who is asked, cannot be sure the defendant is not so indebted, since he has only his word on that side ; and what reason can he have to believe a man, on his word, who he finds is ready to swear

what he owns to be false? so that whoever he endeavours to procure for his purpose, must be either equally wicked with those against whom he is engaged; or, at least, tractable enough to become knowingly and wilfully perjured, as to matter of fact: If he answers that he would undertake this office for an injured friend (as he must, to be consistent) let the consequence be considered, that while he remedies this evil, fallen upon himself, or friend, by the same unrighteous means thus repeated, he does what in him lies, to render oaths useless or destructive; and perhaps nothing can be introduced more pernicious to society, than such a disregard to the sanction of an oath, or rather such an abuse and perversion of it. And has not every man an equal right to act in
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the same manner, in like circumstances? Where must this end? Why the last security that men have over one another, will be destroyed. Wherefore, how useful soever such a conduct may be in peculiar instances, the allowance of it must introduce the greatest mischiefs, since every one would judge for himself, what cases were proper, and what not; and then there would be no certainty of life, possessions, or testimony; and hence such practices are universally counted evil. It is therefore less hurtful to the community, that one man should suffer by the insufficiency of human laws, than that the general course of justice should be perverted; and the most sacred tie or bond of Truth and equity be dissolved. But in submitting to the loss, rather than

preventing it by this wicked expedient, the necessity of some different forms of proceeding would evidently appear; and this might occasion a change in the law, for the better preserving of life, and property, against such attempts: however, a noble example of unshaken fortitude would be exhibited; and the person thus acting will have the esteem and applause of all good men, as well as the approbation of his own heart, without which life is of no value; *“and if our own heart condemn us not, then have we confidence toward God,”* and without such confidence, well grounded, it is not to be conceived, that any man can be happy.

It should also be considered, that it may possibly be discovered, that he and his witnesses are perjured; while the perjury,

perjury, and subornation of his adversary, remain undiscovered ; nor is this improbable, for his adversary is supposed to be versed in these iniquitous practices ; to have foreseen, and guarded against, all the chances of discovery, whereas he is a novice, awkward, and timorous ; and not likely to be either wary enough, or bold enough, to go through such an affair, with the appearance of innocence, and without betraying himself in some circumstance or other ; and if this should happen, it is he who will appear to the world to be the cheat, and supporting his villiany by these wicked measures. And what a figure will such a man make ! Would he not be sunk to the last stage of infamy ; and be subjected

to the detestation and abhorrence of mankind?

He who believes that the world is governed by wisdom and justice, must believe there will be a difference (some how or other) between one who, in this, and in all other cases, regulates his actions, by the dictates of his conscience, and one who does not. And if, on the contrary, there are any who disbelieve these things (which is much to be doubted) it would be the lowest degree of baseness, to take advantage of that opinion; and pretend to give the strongest assurance possible of the Truth of his assertions, by appealing to God, in whom he does not believe, only to deceive the more effectually, and with impunity. A speculative Atheist, therefore, if an honest
man,

man, would scorn so mean an artifice, besides that he is as liable to detection as a Theist, as punishable if detected, and as much subject to obloquy; so that no principles whatever can excuse, or even countenance, this conduct.

Whether or no it be lawful and justifiable, on the Principles of Morality and Religion, to say, and order Servants to say, that we are not at home, when we are?

A. **T**HE use of speech, is to communicate our thoughts one to another: words are arbitrary, and may therefore signify whatever it is agreed they shall signify; and sentences, or forms of speech, might have

signified things different, or even contrary, to what they do, had use and custom so authorised. Many words and phrases have, in time and by custom, obtained different and contrary senses. As for instance, the word *knave* now signifies *a dishonest man*; formerly it signified only *a servant*. The word *villain* is now constantly used for *a bad man*; heretofore it only signified *a person holding lands, by a certain kind of tenure*. So, *I am your humble servant*, is frequently used by a superior, to an inferior; and in cases where no kind of service is intended by the person using the expression, or expected by him to whom it is said, or written, but given and taken only as a mode or fashion of civility, and so understood by both parties, and by all indifferent persons,

persons. So we give or send our *duty* to a duke, which is a compliment made to his quality, but to whom we neither owe nor intend any duty, in the sense of that word, as used on other occasions. These, and many other forms of speech, are like the current coin, whose value is just such as the laws, and customs of the country, have stamped upon it; and therefore neither the giver nor taker of it deceives, or is deceived, by it. In like manner, the phrase, that “such a one is not at home,” by present use and long prescription, neither means, nor is intended *always* to mean, nor is understood by the person, who receives this as an answer to his enquiry, to signify, that the person visited is, *literally, abroad*; but does also frequently signify, and is understood to signify,

D 4 that

that he is not then disposed to see company : and this is so perfectly and so generally understood, that no one takes it amiss ; though he should know afterwards, or even be told by the person himself, that he actually was at home, when denied. Besides, this is esteemed so civil a manner of excusing the non-admittance of company, that no other phrase can be substituted in its room, which would not offend ; while this remains the fashionable way of saying, one chuses to be alone. And this is so evidently the meaning of the phrase in question, that nothing is more common than for a servant to ask his master, whether he is, or is not, at home to-day ? which words therefore cannot, as thus used and authorised by custom, mean any other than “ Sir, do you
 “ admit

“ admit company to day, or not ? ”

And, as was said above, since words are arbitrary, these words might originally have signified so, as well as they now do, by this change of their application ; for all words mean, and only mean, what it is agreed they should mean :

*Multa renascentur quæ jam cecidere,
cadentque*

*Quæ nunc sunt in honore vocabula, si
volet usus ;*

*Quem penes arbitrium est et jus & norma
loquendi.* HOR.

Usus enim facit auctoritatem.

VET. SCHOL.

On the other hand, B. says, that, notwithstanding any corrupt custom to
the

the contrary, the words " my master
 " is not at home," do now strictly and
 properly signify, that the person spoken
 of, is really and truly *abroad*; nor is
 there any other more distinct and proper
 way of saying so; and it is absurd to
 pretend, that the same phrase signifies
 two different propositions. This, in-
 stead of expressing our thoughts, which
 A. allows to be the use and design of
 speech, would be to abuse language,
 and introduce confusion; and therefore
 this phrase must still signify what it
 originally did; at least, till another be
 substituted and authorised to signify
 really, " that a person *is not at home*;"
 otherwise, this cannot be said at all, so
 as to be understood and believed; when
 it may be (as in some cases it is) abso-
 lutely necessary to be strictly and truly
 said

said and believed. For instance, if the servant of a merchant or trader should say, " his master is not at home," to any one to whom he is indebted, and it be afterwards discovered that he was at home ; this false answer is, in the eye of the law, deemed an act of bankruptcy. And other cases might be mentioned, in which it may be necessary, that the answer be literally true. Surely, therefore, it would be better not to countenance, or comply with, so foolish and unreasonable a custom, that introduces such equivocation, to the perversion of the use of language. Besides, it is so far from being true, that these words signify, or are understood to signify, that the person is so engaged, busy, or indisposed, as to wish to be excused from seeing company ; that,

though

though a man might, in a civil manner, say any of these things himself to the enquirer, or visitor, yet the same person could not have the face to say, " Sir, I am not at home : " on the contrary, he avoids being seen, or heard, or any way discovering that he is actually at home. But why such caution, if he does not intend to deceive ? and if he does, it is no other than a lye, properly speaking ; how much soever it may be pretended, that the phrases are synonymous in their acceptation. And therefore, though the former might, on some occasions, be said by himself, yet the latter must be delivered by a servant, who knows he says what is false, and that his master ordered him so to do. Now it is much to be feared, that there may be no small difficulty,

to instruct this servant so thoroughly and effectually, in the principles of this refined sort of good-breeding, as to enable him to split the hair; and distinguish so nicely about the nature of lying, as that he shall conclude, that his master would not, on any consideration in the world, be really guilty of a lye, or excuse him, if he should be guilty, on any other occasion; for it is all along supposed, that this practice is justified by the best and most conscientious people, who condemn lying on any pretence whatsoever; and are therefore obliged to condemn this practice, unless they can both satisfy themselves, and also make it appear to others, and even to their own servants, that it is not lying. It is often said, "that no other phrase by way of answer

" is

“ is current, or can be used without
 “ offence ;” which, if true, is no justifi-
 cation of what is in itself criminal ;
 and is only saying, “ that it is the
 “ fashion to lye, and unfashionable to
 “ be offended with it.”

That some inconveniences may at-
 tend a constant uniform attachment to
 Truth, is granted : but what then ?
 what is virtue, if every little inconve-
 nience be thought sufficient excuse, to
 deviate from it ? and where is the
 merit of virtue, if nothing be sacrificed
 to maintain it inviolate ?

But when the matter is thoroughly
 considered, it will be found, that these
 little inconveniences bear no proportion
 to the great advantages of Truth and
 veracity. A man who is known, both
 by his avowed principles, and answer-
 able

able conduct, never to allow himself in any kind or degree of falshood, or, on any motive whatsoever, to depart from strict Truth, will have a weight and influence to be acquired by no other means: besides, that his example will have the best effects in his own family, and particularly among his servants; which is far from being a low or trivial consideration, much of the general good of society depending on the wise and just government of families; and the influence of such a character is as extensive as the knowledge of it. It may also be added, that there is something weak, mean, and base, in equivocation and evasion; something not very distant from deceit, something in the person's mind who is guilty of it, which he had rather not feel.

feel. Whereas in the mind of the other, who never deviates from strict Truth, on this or any other occasion, there is a noble consciousness of integrity, uprightness, and fortitude, of ease, security, and tranquillity; no fears or apprehensions of discovery, no embarrassment or difficulty, on any examination or scrutiny; but all is clear, open, candid, and ingenuous; his heart and professions are of a piece, and he has a witness within, which affords him more exalted consolation, and a higher kind of satisfaction, than all other testimonies can produce; and which very fully compensates for any trifling advantages, that may be missed by his firm adherence to Truth.

The true state of the case may be, that the person denied is indisposed, or
has

has set apart a day for some particular affair, either of business or pleasure, or has a select company by appointment, which makes it inconvenient, or disagreeable, to admit any others not of the party, or for some reason chuses to receive no other visitors. Now if custom and fashion authorised the giving of any of these particular true reasons for answer; or, instead of such, any general answer equally true, as “ that he was
 “ engaged, and did not see company
 “ to-day,” if this were given and received without offence, so as fully to supply the place of saying, “ he was
 “ not at home,” Qu. whether the most sanguine defender of the present practice would not prefer it? and if so, he may be asked, why he would prefer this? must he not say, that he finds in

himself something that revolts at falsehood or equivocation, and that he naturally loves Truth, better than any kind of deceit; and always chuses to speak Truth, when it will serve his purpose? Once more then, ought a man to have any purpose, that Truth will not serve? Surely, he ought not. “ How! may
 “ he not be alone when he pleases?
 “ must he admit company, be it ever
 “ so inconvenient? nay, perhaps, when
 “ it is absolutely improper; when it
 “ would interrupt, or prevent, the execution of some desirable or laudable
 “ scheme? perhaps, something of great
 “ importance? may he not, on such
 “ occasions, be master of his own house
 “ and time? are not these reasonable
 “ demands? that no one can refuse,
 “ admitting to be such?” They are certainly;

tainly; and therefore no reasonable man, and who claims the same liberty (as indeed all do,) can or ought to be offended, when he is told that his friend is so engaged. Therefore the true answer is the proper one; and if any will be offended at it, it is evident *he* must be the unreasonable man, and the fault is in *him* who takes the offence: and if we are to act against our own judgments in this, or in any case, lest unreasonable people should be offended, whom we do not design to offend; we shall have no rule of action within ourselves, but must vary our conduct with the different opinions of those with whom we may have any intercourse. And it is every day seen, that the exertion of the greatest virtues will give offence to some people; but no wise

and good man ever thought himself justifiably excused, from doing what he was convinced was his duty, on such reasons as these.

Again, there was a time when this custom or fashion had its beginning, and he who began it, must have told a direct untruth, and intended to deceive; that is, would have had it believed that he was actually abroad; and this cannot, nor will certainly, be defended, by such as pretend to have a regard to Truth; which is also evident by their arguments, in support of the lawfulness of this practice; for they pretend that it is no lye, and that those who receive the answer are not deceived; but understand by it either, “that they
“are not at home,” or that they are so engaged, as to chuse not to see company.

pany. Very well ; is not this allowing that, if those who receive the answer are deceived, and those who give it intend to deceive ; then it would be a direct lye, and not justifiable on their own principles ? Now if the thing was originally unlawful, and such as these persons could not have allowed themselves to practise ; it follows that this custom could not have been begun by them, or introduced by conscientious people. How then can such satisfy themselves in countenancing, abetting, and establishing, a course of action, which is founded on principles they must disavow ? If it may be permitted, on this occasion, to descend so low as to a vulgar observation ; the mention of which, its appositeness to the question in debate will excuse ; it is frequently

said, that if there were no receivers of stolen goods, there would be no thieves; between these two sorts of criminals, there seems to be no other difference; but that the one has not so much courage as the other: so, in the case before us, these upright people, who would never have dared to begin this practice, are very glad to shelter themselves under it, and to make their advantage of it. And the worst of it is, that their example not only confirms this particular custom, but gives a sanction to the false principles on which it was first introduced; excusing those who were the authors of it, and consequently of all similar cases founded on the same principles, which these very people pretend, all the while, to disavow, and would be afraid and ashamed to act upon

2

immediately

immediately and directly. And therefore, how trifling soever the subject of this debate may at first sight appear, the consequences of settling it may be very important; because, if the principles on which this practice is founded are once admitted and established, there may be an end of veracity on one side, and of a proper confidence on the other, and our words and actions may become too generally equivocal. For nothing gives such authority to a doubtful rule, in weak and wavering minds, as the example of those whose general integrity has gained them the character of good men.

A. begs leave to be heard by way of reply, and says, it is not disputed that the words, "such a one is not at home," do properly signify what they

literally exprefs; but he contends that they *now* alfo fignify, that “the perfon is not to be feen, though at home,” by common uſage, agreement, and long preſcription, and are ſo underſtood by both parties; and that, notwithstanding what has been advanced by B. concerning the firſt introduction of this practice, the perversion and confuſion of language, &c. we of this age, muſt uſe words and phraſes in the ſenſe we find them uſed, and are no more accountable for the etymology, or pretended original ſenſe, than if they never had any other but the preſent; for they truly ſignify *now*, juſt what it is *now* agreed they ſhall ſignify, and nothing more or leſs: He therefore conſiſtently owns, that he would not have begun or introduced
this

this custom, because it would *then* have been direct lying; as he would not *now* call an honest man a knave, or a villain, which terms he should have used formerly in speaking of a servant, or tenant, however honest, because they were then so used and understood. It is sufficient, and has been esteemed so, in all ages and countries, that we speak the language of the time and place, in which we happen to live. Nor is this “availing himself of the iniquity
 “of others (as B. suggests) “like the
 “receiver of stolen goods,” for here *long possession* has given them the sanction of legal property, as good a right as any the law knows. And by this rule, the common answer, that “such a
 “one is not at home,” does *now* properly signify either, that “he is actually
 “abroad,”

“ abroad,” or that, “ he is (for some
 “ reason) not disposed to see company,”
 and is understood to mean one or other
 of these two propositions (no matter
 which) either being a proper answer to,
 and dismissal of, the visitor, though
 expressed by one of the propositions
 only, since by mutual consent that one
 includes the sense of *both*; nor is the
 visitor deceived, because he understands
 it in this double or doubtful sense, and
 is neither concerned, nor offended, that
 the answer is indeterminate, in this
 respect, it being absolute, determinate,
 and simple, as an answer to the pur-
 port of his enquiry; for the friend is
 not *now* to be seen, and the words of the
 answer convey that meaning fully and
 clearly, and are taken so to do; and
 are

are therefore the true and proper answer to all that he is understood to ask *.

As to the difficulty of giving an answer, that shall certainly signify that the person enquired after is not *denied*, but really abroad, it is admitted that since the words, “ he is not at home,” are by common use and acceptation equivocal, it will be necessary to vary the answer, in order to obviate this uncertainty; but then let it be remembered, that the words, “ he is not at

* This phrase is the proper translation (as a phrase) of the French *Monsieur n' est pas visible*, for it is a rule in translation, universally received, that one phrase is to be rendered by another, which answers to it, in the language into which the translation is made; for close literal translations would in some cases be direct nonsense, and, in others, wholly unintelligible; therefore a Frenchman (residing here) would be obliged to order his servant to say, *he is not at home*, on those occasions, in which the above phrase would be used in France.

“ home,”

“ home,” will, for the reason alleged, be ambiguous, though given in answer by a person who may scruple complying with the present custom; and who will therefore be under the same necessity of making some variation; and also, that this is no more the fault of A. than of B. since both are equally obliged to this, whatever their opinions may be. But, however, this purpose is effectually served by the very words above; for if the servant is ordered to say, “ Sir, my master is not *denied*, as “ usual, but is actually abroad,” the ambiguity is entirely removed; and this answer cannot be understood in any other, than in that one sense which the words naturally convey; for this plain reason, because these words, thus ranged, do not form any phrase that custom has

autho-

authorised to express any sense different from, or other than, the primary and literal sense.

The case of the merchant is indeed singular, and merits consideration. The law takes no cognizance of modes or fashions, nor decrees by the rules of politeness, nor will make allowance for them ; but words in statutes must signify what the lord chief justice (who is the interpreter of them) declares to be their sense : and it is an adjudged point in Westminster-Hall, that if a servant says, by his master's order, that " he " is not at home," when he is, and to a creditor, this shall be deemed an act of bankruptcy ; and a jury will be directed to give their verdict according to evidence of fact, on a single sense of the words, without appeal to custom for a different

a different and larger interpretation of the phrase, " he is not at home ;" but whether such answer even to a creditor, who does not at the same time make a demand of his debt, is so deemed, B. has not determined. However, as A. disputes no facts that may appear against his reasoning ; but is ready to allow all the weight of every argument that can be offered, if he should refuse to a merchant, under these circumstances, the liberty claimed and used by others, among whom no such consequences can follow ; this restriction may be considered in the same manner, as the non-currency of some species of coin in certain places, which pass, without scruple, every where else ; as was hinted by A. at the beginning : thus, for instance, the bank of England re-
fuses

fuses to take Portugal and Spanish pieces, which are current all over the kingdom besides. So if, at the Royal Exchange, a custom be established peculiar to those who frequent it, that is not binding to the rest of the nation, who have entered into no agreement to regulate themselves by it; so that (to return to our subject) it may still pass for a general rule, that words and phrases are to be used in the sense understood and agreed on in the places, and by the parties, where, and with whom, we reside and converse.

To the objection that, “ a man cannot himself, with any propriety or decency, say, that “ he is not at home,” but is obliged to order his servant to deliver the message,” it is replied, that the reason of this is not really

really to prevent the Truth being known; but *absolutely* to exclude company by the shortest, surest, and civilest manner, among well-bred people, by whom it is so understood, and no other-wise.

This leads to the consideration of the danger of corrupting servants, which A. allows to be a matter of no small importance; and he thinks it is incumbent on masters, to explain to such servants, fully and clearly, the nature and import of the answer they are ordered to give, and the sense in which it is by general agreement understood; for it is of the utmost consequence, that they should be persuaded that their master would not, on any account, be guilty of a *lye*, or countenance it in them, much less command it; and if the
 master's

master's representation be not sufficient to convince and satisfy the servant, he cannot be justified in requiring it, but must excuse such servant; for it would be cruel, as well as immoral, to force, or even persuade him, to act against his conscience; nor can the master be excusable, before he knows the real sentiments of the servant.

What B. says, with respect to giving offence by the true answer, is very much to the purpose, if it was allowed by A. that the answer he contends for was false; and A. does agree with him, that the danger of offending our friends, by giving the true answer, is by no means a sufficient excuse for giving a false one; but that is taking for granted the point in dispute. And A. insists, that his answer is as true as B's. to the

purpose of the enquiry : and therefore, the concern that B. discovers, for maintaining and preserving veracity and confidence among mankind, though highly laudable on a proper occasion, is here unseasonable ; because it has the appearance of reproaching A. as having less regard to them, while he professes the contrary ; for all his arguments tend to prove, that they are no way injured, by the conduct he endeavours to justify ; and he is as ready to condemn it as B. if it can be made appear, that he is herein mistaken ; and he would give up the point in dispute, if he apprehended the cause of virtue in any degree weakened, by maintaining the side he has taken ; and therefore, can very sincerely subscribe to all that B. has

has said, at the conclusion of his speech in recommendation of Truth and veracity.

C. has considered, with all the impartiality he is able, what has been said on both sides ; and allows that there is so much appearance of reason, in what has been offered by A. that he cannot condemn those who are convinced of the lawfulness of the practice in question, and act on that conviction ; at the same time that the arguments of B. seem to have great weight ; and are such as, he apprehends, are not easily to be confuted : therefore, if he allows those who can satisfy themselves in it, to make use of the liberty which others cannot take ; they however have no right to be offended with the more scrupulous, when these explicitly de-

clare, that “ they cannot, for certain
 “ reasons, see company, though at
 “ home ;” who, in their turn ought
 not to be offended with those, when
 they would have the same thing under-
 stood by implication, though expressed
 in other terms.

*Let every man be fully persuaded in his
 own mind. To him that thinketh it is sin,
 to him it is sin ; but let no man judge an-
 other.*

On P E R S P I C U I T Y

In S P E A K I N G and W R I T I N G.

IT is presumed in general, that men have it in their power to communicate their thoughts one to another; and that they do so with more or less clearness, in proportion as they conceive more or less clearly, excepting where the language in which they converse is deficient, or not well understood; but in such cases there are expedients, as circumlocution, comparisons, illustrations; but then the more diffuse we are obliged to be, the less distinct and clear, by necessary consequence.

On those subjects in which mankind are most interested, they can express their ideas with greatest perspicuity, not only because they have thought most about them, but also because, for the same reason, language is most full and copious with respect to these.

There are other subjects, that are very rarely (if ever) the matter of conversation, and ideas pass in our minds, that perhaps have never been communicated by one man to another; and for which, on that account, there may be no terms in any language. The colours of the Rainbow are distinct, supposed original, and have names by which we communicate the sensations they give us of red, yellow, blue, &c. but there are a thousand others, composed

posed of these which have no names, or not precise; and therefore, we cannot communicate our ideas of them but confusedly. For instance, the word *brown* is used for many different colours: Of one of these (perhaps having just seen it) I have a distinct idea; but have no term, by which to convey that idea distinctly to another. Again, to communicate clearly, is relative to the hearer, as well as the speaker. A man may deliver himself with all the accuracy possible, and be understood by those qualified to receive; whereas, others may not understand for want of requisites in them, and yet it may happen in some cases that the speaker, being apprised of this, could have accommodated himself to such others: but *he* may in general be very pro-

perly said to speak clearly, who does so to the apprehension of those qualified.

A man may also be said, to deliver himself with perspicuity, if he makes his hearers fully understand his notions, wñether those notions are just or not; justness of sentiment being a different thing from perspicuity of speech.

On joining in worship with People of different sentiments, and complying with Forms not wholly approved by us.

Q. **W**HETHER it is reasonable, or not, to pay any worship to the Supreme Being, by whom we suppose the world and ourselves to have been produced, and on whom we must therefore think ourselves dependent ?

Whatever we are, have been, or expect to be,

Whatever we enjoy, have enjoyed, or hope,

Whatever we suffer, have suffered, or fear, must be owing primarily to him; as
the

the original cause of the existence of this system, of which we make a part. For to whatever lower and more immediate causes our enjoyments and sufferings may be occasionally ascribed; they evidently arise out of our make, situation, and the circumstances that surround us, with their relations among themselves and to us; in respect of all which we are what we are, unavoidably and necessarily, by the uncontrollable disposition of the Maker of the world. The wisdom and power of this Being are manifest in the contrivance, execution, and constant support of this great and stupendous fabrick; with all its parts so various, yet so admirably fitted and justly connected, that it strikes the eye of the most common beholder with astonishment, and the mind of the

contem-

contemplative philosopher with the highest veneration; which naturally lead both to silent adoration at least, or internal worship. These sensations arise, at times, in the minds of all; but make deeper and stronger impressions on those who are less immersed in the hurry of business or amusements; but the strongest and most constant, in such who devote themselves to the study of nature; wherein, though they penetrate not very far, yet they soon perceive enough to convince them of the infinite perfections of the Deity, and our absolute dependence on him, as well in our present state, as for all that can await us hereafter, which, however it may be supposed to result from the good, or the ill use we make of our liberty; yet even that, if we have such
a power,

a power, is as much derived from him as any other of our powers ; and if we have it not, then we are yet more effectually subjected to a disposition of things, by us unalterable ; but which is still supposed to be his, and we must still eventually owe our state to him, whatever it be, whether of determined or of possible happiness : For if any maintain the doctrine of absolute necessity, they will be obliged to assert that all will be finally happy, or else they must deny goodness to be an attribute of the Deity, it being inconsistent with the least degree of it, to produce creatures who are necessarily led, or impelled, to a series of actions, that terminate in misery. It follows then clearly, that all *must be*, or *may be*, finally happy, if goodness be justly ascribed
to

to the Supreme Being; but of this the characters are so evident throughout, as to need no formal proof.

Wisdom and power excite in us admiration; goodness claims our love. Adoration therefore seems natural from creatures to their creator and protector, and a sense of benefits will produce expressions of gratitude, as it does occasionally, in a less degree, from one to another of our fellow-creatures. So that worship seems natural and reasonable, and as such there is the highest probability that it may be acceptable to the Deity; and since sentiments of this kind are common to all men, it is not strange that in every age, and in every country, they should have agreed to meet together, for joint or public worship: and if no more were meant
by

by it, than an acknowledgement of the perfections of the Deity, of our dependence upon him, acquiescence in, and humble submission to his providence, this would seem decent and laudable; but if, besides, we had a sense of having offended him by any actions inconsistent with the above professions regarding him, or by such as were injurious to our fellow creatures, can any thing be imagined more congruous and fitting, than that we should confess our sins, and implore his forgiveness and mercy? that, on all occasions, we should pray to him for influence, protection, and support? and that we should render praise and thanksgiving for all the benefits we have enjoyed, or now possess? Something of this nature has been the universal practice of mankind,

and

and is that part of religion which directly regards the Deity. But as the modes of addressing him have been exceedingly various, some superstitious, some idolatrous, some seemingly inconsistent with just and worthy notions of him, hence arises another question, viz. Whether a person, convinced that it is his duty to worship God, and to countenance, by his example, those who do, may lawfully join with any assembly or congregation of worshippers, in any country where he happens to be, how different soever their sentiments, expressions, and practice in it may be from his own, upon this sole presumption, that they (as all every where are supposed to do) intend ultimately the same thing which he intends; that is, to render to the Supreme Being the worship

ship which they think most acceptable to him ; and which he is obliged, for that reason, to believe really accepted by God, who regards the heart, and judges by the intention, and who therefore, knowing also his, knows that, in this instance, he joins, as giving sanction, by his presence, to worship in general, how much soever he may differ in his own opinion from this particular manner? Or whether, on account of such difference, he ought to refuse joining with these, or any others whatsoever, whose sentiments and practice are not agreeable to his own? In the former case, he obtains the esteem of those among whom he resides, and may have considerable influence, for their benefit as well as his own; which advantages would be superseded, and
instead

Instead of them, either contempt, hatred, or perhaps persecution, would probably attend him, and all his influence be lost: besides that he might, by complying, be instrumental in producing a change for the better, his catholic spirit would certainly have great weight with the more reasonable and considerate among them; for it is supposed, in such case, that, if called upon, or obliged, to declare himself, he will frankly own and avow the generous principles on which he acts; and take the consequences of such avowal, whatever they may happen to be, deceit being not justifiable on any pretence. And has not this, or something like this, been the conduct of the wisest men in all ages?

But in the latter case, that of refusing to join with any who are not exactly of his sentiments, he will perhaps be obliged to renounce all public worship, or join with such small parties as scarce to deserve the name of public; and (if conscientious people should think this necessary) these parties, or sects, would be so many, as to produce rather a general distraction, than union in a case where all should unite.

Upon the whole, therefore, it is highly probable, that the best ends will be answered by a general compliance. For he who thinks it his duty to worship publicly, will then have constant opportunities of so doing; which would otherwise be very rare, if any. And by thus joining, even where the manner and form are such as he cannot

not

not otherwise approve than as a means of general adoration, and countenancing those who intend the same thing, his temper and moderation may have very salutary effects; and above all, by promoting that benevolent and charitable disposition expressed by this conduct (and the explanation of it as opportunity offers) which supposes the Supreme Being to accept, with complacency and approbation, the sincere devotion of the heart in whatsoever way offered, or by whatsoever ceremonies accompanied, provided these are such as the worshippers suppose required, or most acceptable; for indeed the best and most rational can by no other means recommend themselves to the Divine Favour.

He therefore, who knows the hearts of all, will certainly accept the services of those who aim at pleasing him, according to the best of their understanding. And why should any one refuse to join with those who (he believes) intend the same which he intends, and whom he must (on these principles) suppose to be acceptable to the Deity, as well as himself?—Thus far in general.

But to descend to particulars ; may we lawfully join in explicit professions of Faith, or creeds containing articles which we do not believe?

May we subscribe to doctrines which we think false, for peace sake? and may we not only passively and silently, but actively and openly, in express terms, and in our whole behaviour, avow and
exercise

exercise the religion of any country, where we happen to live ?

It should seem that many wise and good men have acted in this manner in all countries, and it is to be presumed, that some of our own have embraced and exercised the religion of it, without believing all the particular tenets they have subscribed, or approving all the doctrines and modes of worship which they profess and practise.

There is a great difference between complying with what is already established, and delivering a form of a man's own composing, as a profession of Faith and rule of practice ; in this latter case, he would be justly condemned, if he should offer any other than his real sentiments. For the Truth of things, as well as his own

veracity, are concerned ; and it is expected that he will not impose, or deceive, nor has he any plea for a dispensation : but in the former case, he will not only be excused, but perhaps commended, by the public, for paying a proper deference to authority, and for endeavouring to preserve the peace and order of the church, rather than disturb it by proposing, unasked, his own peculiar notions ; but he cannot be justified in the sight of God, unless he is, at the same time, persuaded that the great ends of religion will be most effectually secured by it ; and unless he can reconcile this conduct to his own conscience.

It may however be objected, that,
 “ if good men had always thought it
 “ both lawful and expedient to act on
 “ such

“ such principles, there never would
 “ have been any reformati^ons in this,
 “ or other countries; we should still
 “ have been Roman-Catholics; or
 “ rather, without opposition to esta-
 “ blished religions, the true could never
 “ have been propagated at all; and
 “ this island would have remained
 “ Pagan: nor indeed would Christi-
 “ anity have been received any where.”

This is at least *Argumentum ad Christi-
 anum*; and if not conclusive in general,
 must yet appear so to all believers of
 any supposed revelation whatsoever, and
 to the Jewish and Mahometan as well
 as Christian; and for the same reasons
 will have its weight, in proportion, with
 respect to capital errors or abuses, that
 may occasionally be introduced in any
 of these religions. And surely the sin-

cerity required of a believer, particularly of Christianity, will oblige him to the strictest Truth in his profession and practice, even without the consideration of propagating or reforming his religion; but merely respecting God, and his own conscience. To all which may be added, the universal obligation that all men are under, to preserve their integrity, and chiefly in matters of the greatest importance.

Now it may be enquired, whether these principles (taken in their full extent) will, or will not, warrant the joining in all the solemn acts of devotion, of any prevailing religion; such, for instance, as the sacrament according to the church of England?

The inducements to comply with this institution in particular, are of the
same

same nature with those which in general influence these persons, viz. a real persuasion, that it is their duty to worship God in public, to join with others who have the like persuasion, and intend the same thing; to add their example, to give their countenance and sanction, as fully as they can, on all occasions, to the practice of religion.

If these general motives, with the reasons offered, do not appear to us sufficient to warrant a compliance, in this, or any other particular instance; we certainly ought not, in such instances, to comply, however we may in others. In short, there are but two ways of acting; the one is absolutely to refuse joining in any form or mode, which we do not perfectly approve in all its parts; and then (as has been observed already)

already) there will be very few found so thoroughly agreed, as to be able to make a society or congregation. The other way is to comply in all indifferent circumstances, and in every thing which does not appear to us sinful or immoral; though we should not otherwise have chosen them, than as prescribed by authority, or practised by those among whom we live, and to which, for the peace of society, we may think ourselves obliged to submit. And this, it is apprehended, may be the safest, wisest, and best rule, that can be formed in cases of this nature; at the same time, forbearing, and even refusing, in all such cases, in which we cannot comply, without acting directly against our judgment and conscience,

On

On RELIGION, Natural and Revealed.

IF God be not infinitely powerful, wise, and good, and consequently just and merciful, there can be no foundation for any religion; and if he be all this, then it must be true that in every age, in every nation, and of every religion that has been at any time past, or is now embraced and professed, all those who have sincerely endeavoured to please him in the manner, and by the means, they have thought most acceptable to him; and all those who now do so, have been, and are, most certainly accepted of him, whether their religion be that of *Cbina*, of *Siam*, of *Persia*, of *Turkey*, of *Chriſtendom*, of *Peru*, or *Mexico*; that is, whether

ther *Christians, Jews, Mahometans*, or such as know not any revelation.

If this were not the case, the very perfections of God, above mentioned, would necessarily induce him to reveal to *every man in the world* (without exception) that religion, the observance of which *alone* could render him acceptable to God : and hence it follows, that this is, and must be, the case, viz. that every man in the world has in fact all the light necessary, to enable him to discover his duty to God, and to his fellow creatures ; for if not, none would have so much as a chance for salvation, but those of the *one true* religion ; which, supposing it to be the Christian, or any other, is become theirs by mere accident ; for had they been born elsewhere, or never heard of it, they must have

have been lost, with all the rest of mankind, which would be utterly incompatible with the justice, as well as with every other attribute, of the Deity ; and to entertain such an opinion of him, is worse than direct atheism, for it is less impious to suppose no God, than one that is unjust and cruel.

Q. Whether therefore, in general, we are not obliged to allow, that reason, or the light of nature, is sufficient to lead men to the knowledge of their duty towards God, and their fellow creatures ; for this plain reason, because God has, in fact, afforded no other light to far the greatest part of the world in all ages ; and we Christians generally suppose there never were any other divine revelations, besides the Mosaic and Christian ? The Mosaic was
only

only to one nation (which made a very small and inconsiderable part of the world) and it does not seem to have been intended for any other; but rather as a distinguishing privilege and badge of separation from all the other nations of the earth, by which they were said to be, and taught to believe themselves, God's peculiar people. But the Christian revelation breathes a spirit so different, that it requires some skill to reconcile the two, and render them compatible. This teaches, that *God is no respecter of persons*, that *his tender mercies are over all his works*, that *he hateth nothing that he hath made*; but whoever receives this as a divine revelation is not at liberty to reject the other, as being evidently built upon it, and continually referring to it; which

is

is so manifest, that it cannot be disputed.

The Christian revelation is professedly designed for the whole world.—*Go and preach the Gospel to all nations! and to every creature, &c.* Now if, in fact, all nations had not only heard of, but actually received, the Gospel; and if, by its influence, it had apparently reformed mankind; if, since its introduction into the world, men had been more pious, more just, more beneficent, and, above all, more charitable, that is, in the full extent and meaning of the word *charity*; if the face of things were thus changed for the better, we might then indeed, with reason, extoll the great advantages of our religion, and its preference to the light of nature.

But

But let us take a survey of things, as they really are. And first, with regard to the extent of Christianity, how small a part of the world are Christians even by profession? And how much smaller a part are Protestants? Yet we Protestants are apt to think the Roman-Catholics not much the better, perhaps the worse, for their Christianity; however, we must allow them to be Christians, for they profess themselves Christians, and believe themselves such as it was originally intended Christians should be; and we can say no more of ourselves. If any other people or nation, professing any other religion, were to form a judgment of Christians and Christianity by the professors of it, they would naturally do so from the Roman-Catholics; as being the most numerous,
and

and the most powerful body. It is commonly said indeed, that we are to form our opinions of Christianity from the Gospel itself, and not from what some Christians pretend to believe of it, or from their lives and actions; but surely it is a very melancholy reflexion, that the Gospel should have so little influence on the generality of Christians, that their professions and lives should bear no comparison with it, or have any similitude to it; so unlike are their conduct and manners, especially in the persecuting countries, to what is taught in it, that if any other people, not Christians, nor having the opportunity of consulting the sacred oracles, were to judge of Christianity by these professors of it, they would in all likelihood conclude it to be the

worst religion that ever was promulgated. And is it not still more strange, that the best religion in the world should have the worst influence on the morals of those who embrace it? Perhaps it may be replied, " that it is
 " an allowed maxim, that the best
 " things corrupted become the worst ;" but is that any argument to prove that bad effects must necessarily follow from a good cause? It may again be replied, " that all this ought to have no weight
 " with us, who have the Bible in our
 " hands, and the liberty of examining
 " for ourselves, and if we find these
 " opinions and practices are not taught
 " in the Gospel; then, after all, that
 " is not chargeable with any of these
 " consequences." Suppose this were allowed, the difficulties which arise may
 never-

nevertheless be proposed, and it may reasonably be asked, who are we, who on examination, find that by far the greater number of Christians are so egregiously mistaken? I say, who or what are we, who are sure we understand the Gospel better than those who differ from us? Not the bulk even of Protestants, but each petty sect carries it against all the rest of Christendom in their own little circle; but to be consistent with ourselves, and our own professed principles as Protestants, we must all renounce infallibility, and therefore must own that we may be mistaken: besides, if we were ever so certain, what a handful is that *we* who are in the right?

Let those true Christians, who are in all respects the better for the Gospel,

compare their number with all the rest of the world; that is, fairly take the whole number of such, from the promulgation of the Gospel to this time, compared with the number of all the rest of the world from that æra, China, Tartary, India, Persia, and other parts of Asia; all that vast continent of Africa, all America, but lately discovered, and very little christianised, if at all the better for it; and also, the greatest part of Europe itself formerly: when it is considered, how small a part of the whole world ever heard of Christianity, and how much smaller a part have all along made that inconsiderable number of true Christians, who alone can be said to be the better for the Gospel; in what sense, or with what propriety, can it be said, that the world stood

stood in need of a revelation, which by far the greatest part never has had ? That the world is enlightened by the Gospel, which light the greatest part of the world never saw ; that the world is so much bettered in its morals, by the excellent system there contained, which the greatest part of the world never knew, seems very inconsistent. Must we not conclude then, that since the light of nature is the only light, which God has thought fit to indulge to the greatest part of mankind ; for this reason, it must be sufficient to answer all the ends, and produce all the effects, he chose should be answered and produced : as the sun answers all the ends, and produces all the effects, designed by it ? To say otherwise, is it not impeaching his

power, wisdom, or goodness? But if the conclusion be just, then it follows, that all that is required of men by way of religion, in order to render them acceptable to God, or by way of morals among one another; that is, their duty to God and their fellow creatures, is deducible from the light of nature.

To say otherwise, is charging him with being a hard task-master, requiring (as the Egyptians of the Israelites) brick without straw; at least, it must be allowed that he cannot justly, and therefore certainly will not, expect more from the greatest part of the world, than the light that is afforded them will enable them to discover and practise. And it highly behoves

behoves those who acknowledge they have a better rule, to act accordingly; and to shew, by their lives and actions, the superior excellence of their principles.

An Enquiry which, or what, is the
true UNIVERSAL RELIGION.

IT is generally supposed and said, that of all the numerous professions of religion, there can be but one *right*; or of the many pretended revelations, there can be but one *true*, at least in the same period or age of the world; for the Christians acknowledge, that the patriarchal is to be considered as the *first*, the Mosaic the *second*, and that the Christian is the *third*, and last revelation from God to men; though the Mahometans, who acknowledge these three, pretend theirs to be the last. Notwithstanding which, the wisest in all ages, and the most rational Christians in the present, assert that sincerity alone,

alone, and not the *mere* Truth of opinion and profession, will recommend us to the favour of God. And indeed, if that were not the case, mankind would be in a most deplorable state; for if of the many systems of religion, one only could secure to us the favour of God, and that one not so obvious to all men, or not so eminently distinguished from the rest, as, by its apparent evidence to leave no room for doubt, in the mind of every upright, honest enquirer, there would be little chance for the salvation of any.

The one true religion therefore (if there be only one such) is known to, or knowable by, every man in the world; and this can be no other, than that which is commonly called the religion of nature, because no other is
universal,

universal, or universally knowable :
 or else there are many *true* particular
 religions, whether revealed, or framed
 by wise and good men ; so that no
 age, or country, is or has been, without
 the means of knowing and worship-
 ping God, and discharging the duty
 owing to him, and to their fellow-crea-
 tures, in an acceptable manner. And
 less than this cannot be asserted, with-
 out reflecting on the justice, as well as
 goodness, of the Deity. Hence it will
 follow, that every man who has a sin-
 cere desire to know, and a determined
 resolution to obey, the will of God, as
 far as he can discover it, may be saved :
 for he who is so fortunate as to have
 embraced the best religion, and so wise
 and well disposed as to live answer-
 ably to it, does no more than this.

That

That infinitely good Being therefore, who knows the hearts of all, *who will reward every man according to his works, who is no respecter of persons, and whose tender mercies are over all his creatures,* will certainly accept such as are above described: and these principles do by no means weaken the authority, or diminish the excellence, of the Gospel, which indeed teaches and confirms them. Nor will this absolve those who are so happy as to live under that dispensation, and who perceive its evidence, from the obligations of Christians; for all such will be in no doubt, that they are in possession of the true religion. But neither these nor any principles will warrant the position of some advocates for Christianity; that such a revelation was *absolutely necessary*, to
reclaim

reclaim and recover mankind, from that corruption, wickedness, idolatry, and ignorance, into which they were fallen; how *expedient* soever it might be.

It seems strange, that these writers should insist (as they generally do) on this *necessity*; and that they should not see how much they expose and injure the cause, which they undertake to defend, by thus assuming more than can be rationally maintained: and yet this is what some of the ablest of them have done.

But how can it possibly have escaped their notice and observation, that thousands, ten thousands, and millions, of the human race, have perished without this *necessary* revelation, or the knowledge

lege of it, both at, and since the time of its promulgation?

We find that the *old* world was destroyed by a flood, on account of its great wickedness, and that afterwards the *new* very soon became like their predecessors; that ignorance, idolatry, and crimes of all kinds, were spread over the face of the earth, long before the gospel appeared; and in places far distant from that where it was first published, as well as from all those parts to which it has since extended.

Now if it be true, that no other means than this revelation were, or could be, sufficient to restore mankind to virtue, happiness, and the favour of God, and that *this* was not afforded; on whom does it reflect that it was not?

And

And is it not much more reasonable, as well as more suitable to the opinion we ought to form of God's government and providence, to suppose that all that was *necessary* has been always granted to all mankind, every where, and in all ages? And that if this revelation has not reached any, it cannot have been *necessary* to such: for it certainly reflects on the justice of God (not to say, his goodness) to assert that he has withheld from his creatures, the means that were *necessary* to their salvation.

Surely it would be more modest and becoming (as it would also much better serve their purpose in recommending the Gospel) to content themselves with shewing the *expedience* and *fitness* of such a system, for enlightning and reforming mankind; the great use and advantage

vantage of it, to those who are favoured with it; and the peculiar obligations such a distinction lays them under, than to conclude that all are unavoidably lost, who have it not; which they must do, while they suppose it absolutely *necessary* to their safety and happiness.

And the reason why it would better serve their purpose, to treat the subject in this manner, is, because in not undertaking too much, they will be able more effectually to support and establish what they do undertake, against such obvious, and against all other objections. Nor, indeed, do the scriptures which contain this revelation, pretend any thing more. Thus *Romans*, ii. 9, 10, 11, &c. *Tribulation and anguish upon every soul of man that doth evil,*
of

of the Jew first, and also of the Gentile ;
 but glory, honour, and peace, to every man
 that worketh good, to the Jew first, and
 also to the Gentile. For there is no respect
 of persons with God.—For when the Gen-
 tiles which have not the law, do by na-
 ture the things contained in the law ; these
 having not the law, are a law unto them-
 selves : which shew the works of the law,
 written in their hearts, &c.—Therefore,
 if the uncircumcision keep the righteousness
 of the law, shall not his uncircumcision be
 counted for circumcision ? iii. 1. 19. 29.
 What advantage then hath the Jew, or
 what profit is there of circumcision ?
 Much, every way ; chiefly because that
 unto them were committed the oracles of
 God, &c.—Whatsoever things the law
 saith, it saith to them who are under the
 law,

law, that every mouth may be stopped. Is he the God of the Jews only? Is he not also of the Gentiles? Yes, of the Gentiles also.

We may be sure, without doubt or hesitation, that all those millions of people, in the interior parts of Africa, America, of Tartary, China, and other parts of Asia; and of the globe unknown to us, who never heard of Christ or Moses, are as safe in regard to their acceptance with God, as any Christians can possibly be; for else we must deny his moral attributes: besides, if these attributes are not true of the Deity, there can be no hope of acceptance for Christians themselves.

And if it be true in any sense, that Christ died for the sins of all man-

kind, to make atonement, or as a propitiation, and that God could not (consistently with his attributes) pardon penitent sinners, without such atonement; and that he has thereby rendered God placable to the world, it must then be as true, that those who never heard of Christ, shall not miss the advantage of his death and sufferings, merely by that ignorance; but, on the contrary, shall be as *truly* benefited by his death and sufferings as Christians, if not so *greatly*; that is, they shall be as *safe*, if not so highly advanced; else the justice, as well as all the other divine attributes are destroyed: which cannot be: therefore, &c.

So that it is most certain, even if the mediation and sufferings of Christ were

were necessary to the salvation of mankind, yet that the knowlege of them is not, cannot be, necessary ; for if it were, then they would be universally known.

A THOUGHT, occasioned by an Assertion, which often occurs in the Writings of Divines, viz. that without Revelation, we could have no Assurance, or well-grounded Hope, of Pardon, though Penitent.

SINCE the attributes of God are always proposed as the rule, by which we ought to examine any pretended revelation; this is confessing that we can, by our faculties, discover that God is infinitely powerful, wise, just, and good. Is it not highly reasonable, then, to expect that such a Being should deal with his creatures consistently with these attributes; nay certain that he will do so, and particularly that he will exercise his goodness

ness and mercy towards those who are proper objects, as well as his justice towards those who shall be proper objects of that? especially if it be considered, that the errors of his creatures are (many of them) owing to their make, and the circumstances with which they are surrounded, and some of them almost inevitable; that he himself produced these creatures, and by his providence placed them in these circumstances. To say then, that forgiveness is not to be hoped from such a Being, on a sincere repentance of all known transgressions, is apparently to deny his attributes; it is saying, that he is not good or merciful, which if he be not, he cannot be supposed to have given any revelation at all, for that is supposed an effect of his goodness; so that

this doctrine of forgiveness must be not only as true as the possibility of a revelation, but as true as the Being of a God; that is, as the perfections we ascribe or attribute to him.

On

ON THE
 PROPHECIES
 OF
 EZEKIEL.

THE threatenings denounced by this Prophet against Israel, though of calamities like those which that unhappy people experienced, at the destruction of Jerusalem, under Titus ; yet, cannot be considered as a prediction of that event, because they were denounced against that very generation, for crimes of which they were guilty ; and principally that of idolatry, without the least hint of any thing like the rejection of a Messiah, or their treatment of one under that character. Besides, this denunciation was above

590 years before the birth of Christ ; and therefore could be no warning to the people then living, to avoid the sins peculiar to so distant a period, and of which they had no apprehension at that time ; but it is generally supposed by Christians that the miseries of the siege of Jerusalem were inflicted on that generation, as a judgment for their unbelief, and their obstinate rejection of the Messiah.

Whether this people suffered any such like calamities, as are in this prophecy threatened, soon after Ezekiel's time, or at any time before the siege of Jerusalem ; or whether, on their repentance, these evils were avoided, does not, I think, appear. But it seems strange, that they should have been constantly so distinguished by Providence,

dence, both in prosperity and adversity ; and that such great nations, as those of China, Japan, &c. of all Africa, of America, should be unnoticed ; and particularly that Peru and Mexico should be subjected to such amazing and undeserved calamities, and that there should be no prophecies, or providential notices, of these extraordinary events, in the only revelations that we suppose to have been ever granted to the world.

Whether,

Whether, and how far, the OPINIONS
of the WORLD are to be regarded
in the Regulation of our MORAL
CONDUCT.

TO the honour of virtue it may be
truly said, that we are restrained
from no natural or reasonable enjoy-
ment by it, when considered pure and
unmixed with superstition or enthu-
siasm. Some philosophers have pro-
fessed to act, and have acted, by the
sole principles of virtue; as they un-
derstood it, with a total disregard to
the opinions of the world; and have
endeavoured to be, and pretended they
were, happy in acquitting themselves
to their own consciences only: and it
is most certain no man can be happy,
who

who acts against his own judgment or conscience.

Indeed it is very hard that he, who, with the utmost diligence, solicitude, and integrity, has, as he thinks, informed himself of what virtue requires; and is resolved, at all hazards, to practise it, should, after that, be controuled by the false and foolish opinions of others; and even of such who have neither thought for themselves, nor formed any consistent resolutions for their own conduct.

It must be acknowledged also, that if a man has the fortitude to avow and act upon his own principles, and is determined not to subject himself to those of the world about him, his conduct will then be uniform and the same, wheresoever he happens to live; whereas,

whereas, otherwise, it must vary with the place in which, and people among whom, his lot is cast, and become, on some occasions, exceedingly burdensome and disagreeable; he will find himself obliged to do, to suffer, and to forbear, what neither virtue, nor wisdom, nor religion require; and lessen, by this means, much of the comfort and happiness of life.

The question therefore will be, which of these two ways is to be chosen? Shall he constantly follow his own judgment? or shall he vary his conduct, according to the sentiments of others? And this is to be decided, as all great and interesting questions ought to be, viz. by examining and weighing the consequences on both sides; and then determining for that course, which will
produce

produce the greatest moment (or quantity) of happiness upon the whole.

Suppose, for instance, that a man was persuaded it was lawful to live with a woman as a wife, without the sanction of matrimony, as enjoined in the country where he resided; which sanction he would willingly avoid, on account of the inconveniences attending it, and which, in some countries, and under some laws, are very great; and that the woman was as fully convinced as he of the lawfulness of such a conduct; they are then to consider, whether what is gained be more than what is lost by it.

The principal, and perhaps only, advantage is, that as the contracting parties engaged themselves, without the intervention of civil or ecclesiastical authority;

thority ; they can (if it be found convenient or eligible) dissolve their contract, without being subject to the almost insurmountable difficulties, that attend the application to those powers ; and which powers, in some cases, cannot, consistently with their rules and forms, relieve them, how reasonable soever it may be that they should be relieved, by separation. And this advantage is greatly heightened, in their imagination, by reflecting on the many unhappy pairs legally united, who drag on their heavy chains, without any hope but from death ; and who (it may be) thought themselves well suited, before experience had convinced them of the contrary. And these considerations, no doubt, prejudice many against the state, who would otherwise marry.

On

On the other hand, the disadvantages of this illegal kind of union are, 1st, *To the man*, disreputation with all who hold matrimony as a sacred institution; that is, with the bulk of mankind, and with whom he must have intercourse, or renounce all society: to these he will frequently be obliged to justify his conduct, and generally will fail in that endeavour, on account of their different sentiments, or, as he will call them, prejudices; and at best, must forfeit the esteem of many worthy people, whose good opinion he would be very glad to possess and cultivate.

2dly, *To the woman*, infamy, with far the greatest part of both sexes, who will not scruple, how unjustly soever, to rank her with the most abandoned; and even the more considerate, who

make proper distinctions, and allowances, will be ashamed of her acquaintance, and not dare (for their own sakes) to justify her, or be known to converse with her; she herself will want the confidence, that always accompanies acknowledged innocence, and will be obliged to spend most of her time alone; as she will not be received in reputable private company, nor regarded nor treated in public, on the common terms of polite, not to say honest people, and must sometimes (if she scruples not however to appear) suffer either positive or negative insults: the man also must shamefully submit to see these indignities offered to the woman that he loves, or resent them, which may draw on worse consequences; to all which he exposes himself, and
her

her by this conduct, and to a constant repetition of them.

3dly, *To the children* illegitimacy, with its train of evils, whether regarding their personal characters, or legal interests: these are brought into the world under peculiar disadvantages, such as (it is highly probable) their parents would have thought some reproach to themselves, had it been their own case; at least, could not but have wished it otherwise.

Now, let these people remonstrate, that “ it is a foolish world in which
 “ they live; and that they think it unreasonable to subject themselves to
 “ the idle opinions and customs of it,
 “ with all its inconveniences, when
 “ they know better, and could establish more reasonable laws, if they

“ had the modelling of them ; and as
 “ it is, why should they not govern
 “ themselves by such as their own
 “ judgments dictate, and in which
 “ their own consciences acquiesce ?”—

Be it so—the question is not what is
 lawful, but what is expedient ? If they
 live alone, secluded from the rest of the
 world, all might be well : but they live
 in society ; and this society will think
 and speak of them, and act towards
 them, according to their own senti-
 ments and customs ; nay, if you please,
 prepossessions.—What then ? Is the good
 opinion, the esteem, the friendship, and
 are the good offices of this society, in
 which you live, and must live, worth
 having, or not ? If not, you are right
 in satisfying your own conscience only ;
 but if they are, what value do you set
 on

on these benefits? For here is the proportion to be settled; if you rate the advantages procured, by cynically persisting in your own way of thinking and acting, higher than those you lose by it, nothing more is to be said; you act wisely. But if, on mature deliberation, you find that more is forfeited than gained, then you act foolishly for yourselves.

To all which may be added, that a good man (and such is the character assumed) will not be so happy with less, as with more, power of doing good; and therefore, the weight and influence he will gain or lose, by different ways of acting, are also to be taken into the account. Now if he cannot presume, that he shall prevail on people to alter their sentiments, laws, and customs,

(which, if he is right, would be a great thing indeed) then perhaps he may find it necessary, to move quietly with the stream; and to guide his own vessel, and direct his neighbours, as well as he can, assisting them with his skill and advice; which will be kindly received, when they see him embarked in the same voyage with themselves, and not affecting a different course, or opposing the current.

The same kind of reasoning must also be admitted, in regard to general conduct, and indeed to all actions, of which the public can take any cognizance: in particular, the intimacies between single persons, that is, the kinds and degrees of freedom taken by the one sex, and allowed by the other, will have the common constructions put

upon them ; and the world, as well as the persons concerned, will draw the usual consequences from them, and will think they have a right to form their expectations by the rules, which custom has authoris'd ; and we may lay ourselves under obligations by these means, from which we cannot honourably disengage ourselves, not only in the opinion of those interest'd, but also of indifferent observers, and all this without explicit declarations ; for actions are as capable of interpretation as words, and will be interpreted, whether we chuse it, or not : therefore, till a resolution is formed, with the approbation of all whom it may concern, we surely ought not to act in a manner, that may import such resolution, or be construed into an obligation, from which we would be

understood to be free ; unless (as in the former case) we are determined to defy the world, and its maxims ; and then (as was there said) we are to consider whether we are gainers or losers by such defiance.

It were indeed to be wished, that nothing but what is really vicious was to be blamed or censured ; and that a strict adherence to virtue alone would secure to us the good opinion of mankind : it is confessed, that it ought ; but it is also true, that this is not the case. On the contrary, we find it necessary to give up many innocent enjoyments, and sacrifice much of the peace and tranquillity of life, for an unsullied reputation ; without which reputation, we should lose many other enjoyments : so that it is impossible
either

either way to enjoy all, to which reason and virtue fairly entitle us.

The best decision that can be made, seems to be this :

That, in the 1st place, we religiously and inviolably preserve a good conscience, not allowing ourselves in any thing whatsoever, which our own hearts condemn :

And, 2dly, that we pay so much deference, at least, to the opinions of those whom we have reason to esteem and love, and whose friendship it behoves us to cultivate, as to deny ourselves some of those gratifications, which these think not so innocent and justifiable, as we ourselves may. This deference, though sometimes painful, is always laudable. *Whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, what-*

*soever things are just, whatsoever things
are pure, whatsoever things are lovely,
whatsoever things are of GOOD REPORT;
if there be any virtue, and if there be any
praise, think on these things. Philippians,
iv. 8.*

VIRTUE

VIRTUE the only Guide to HAP-
PINESS.

IT is natural and right for every Being, to endeavour to procure the greatest happiness, of which he is capable ; but it is absurd to suppose, that a created Being should ever be able to procure happiness to himself, of a kind, or in a manner, other than as intended by his Creator, or contrary to his will and choice.

Again, a Being cannot be happy, but according to his nature, situation, circumstances, &c. and if a social Being, it must be according to the nature of that society, of which he is a member ; that is, as such a part of such a whole, and not as a whole by himself, independent

pendent and unconnected. A man therefore cannot be happy, according to the nature of a man, but as related to the rest of his species in general, and to some society, or government, in particular; a man alone, on an uninhabited island, must be miserable; and if it were not so, it can be the case of but very few, and is an unnatural state.

It follows therefore, that, in order to be as happy, as his nature will admit, a man must act well in the post assigned him by providence, both with respect to himself and to all around him, so as to be justified to his own conscience, and to the consciences of those with whom he is concerned; and a failure, in any degree, in either, is so much abatement to the happiness, of which he is capable.

It

It is of the essence of vice, or folly (which is the same thing), to catch at every present advantage or apparent good, without sufficiently considering consequences; as it is wisdom and virtue to take in the consideration of all circumstances present and future, with a view of procuring the greatest good upon the whole.

How certain soever it be, that virtue is, in general, the road to happiness; and that a virtuous man must necessarily be more happy, than a vicious man in the same circumstances; yet it is also certain, that there are many particular cases, in which a man does, and must, suffer for adhering to virtue, and might sometimes avoid such present evil, by acting differently; but it does by no means follow from hence, that
in

in these instances, he may lawfully quit the path of virtue; and forfeit the character he has hitherto maintained, and lose the credit and influence of a man of probity, by such weak and unsteady conduct. And indeed, according to the common acceptance of the words, virtue that exposes not a man to suffering deserves little praise or reward. Virtue ought never to shrink, or give way in the least, nor does, without forfeiting so much of its value: but then these very instances, in which a man suffers for his virtue, are as necessary to his *ultimate* happiness, as such which produce *present* happiness are to that; else it would be right to quit virtue in these instances; for happiness is the end proposed in virtue itself.

It

It will be found, that a course of virtue will render us more happy than the contrary, in all respects ;

That nothing is our duty, but what has a tendency to our happiness ;

That such a constitution of things is the greatest proof possible, of a wise and good providence.

And since the most ordinary and natural actions may become virtuous or vicious, as attended with certain circumstances ; to illustrate this, one may consider those in which all mankind are concerned ; as eating and drinking : he, who would enjoy the most exquisite pleasures these can afford, will experience the necessity of waiting till his appetite calls for those refreshments ; and of indulging no farther than to satisfy that appetite : if he does, the
pleasure

pleasure abates in proportion as he exceeds, at the same time, that he thereby retards that of repeating it, hurts his constitution, may lessen the number of his future enjoyments, and shorten his life. Thus it appears, that it begins only to be vicious, when it begins to be less pleasant; the most exquisite and lasting pleasure being within the compass of virtue.

As to the pleasure arising from a mutual commerce of the sexes, it will certainly be acknowledged, that the highest of that kind must arise between persons entirely agreeable to each other, that is, in mind, as well as body; and where the esteem and affection are reciprocal: the most abandoned must allow this is to be wished, and that the pleasure cannot be complete otherwise;

to

to which is to be added, that the consequences be desirable, and not such as are to be dreaded; that it be without remorse, without injuring the beloved person in reputation, family, &c. without entailing disease, without hurting the interest of either party; and with the greatest of all satisfactions, the sense of giving pleasure. Now in what course of action is all this to be obtained? If not in marriage, it must however be allowed to approach near that state, which though it may have its inconveniences in some countries, and under certain laws, yet whoever says so, must grant the pleasure less perfect, as it is more distant from it; and that he who is capable of the most delicate and refined sense of these enjoyments, and esteems the person in the highest degree,

gree, cannot bear the thought of rendering such a person less happy in any respect, than it is in his power to make her: for her sake then he will not refuse, nay must chuse, to place her in the most reputable situation, and not expose her to the contempt and injuries of the rest of the world: such a one, therefore, will find himself obliged, on all considerations, to treat her in the most honourable manner, according to the customs of the country where they reside; that is, he must chuse to marry; and whatever comes short of this will render both parties less happy.

A man who would enjoy all the happiness, of which his nature is capable, must consider himself as a member of society; and, besides the many wants, which cannot be supplied but by others,
he

he will not be so happy without, as with, the esteem of mankind, especially of those whom he esteems, and he cannot procure that esteem, without behaving so as to deserve it: If he esteems others, it is for qualities he observes in them, which will naturally lead him to cultivate those dispositions, and habituate himself to that course of action, which has recommended those others to him.

A man formed for true happiness will find more pleasure in the reflection, of having contributed to the happiness of others (especially of those who may deserve his regard), than can possibly be procured by any other means: no pleasure can equal this. Nay, though effects are not always answerable to his wishes, there is this in virtue, that he

who designs right still feels some satisfaction in that very intention: so true it is, that we are formed for virtue, and must be less happy, as we are less virtuous !

This state of things, and this disposition in human nature, therefore, is a strong proof of a wise and good providence ; viz. that our duty and interest are the same thing ; and also, that we should never fail in our duty, but for want of seeing our real interest. It is, therefore, so far from being true, that a moral conduct is a course of self-denial, in which we renounce the pleasures of this life, for those of another ; that, on the contrary, virtue may be considered as the only course, in which we can enjoy the happiness of this. Nor is it true, that virtue requires any
self-

self-denial, more than pleasure or happiness does ; that is, in the same sense in which we forbear eating or drinking more, when we have eaten or drunk sufficiently, for fear of sickness, or deny ourselves other gratifications, for fear of the bad consequences of them ; in short, with respect to a man's self, he may lawfully enjoy every pleasure, to which he has an inclination, and for which he has a capacity, having a proper regard to his constitution, his circumstances, connections, and situation in life * : and with respect to others, so as not to injure them ; for besides the uneasy

* Whatever offers itself under the form of pleasure, demands examination, and the balance ought to determine ; if the pleasure be greater, upon the whole, than all inconveniences attending it, That is to be chosen.

reflections which in that case he will necessarily feel in his own mind, he exposes himself to the like, or perhaps much greater (for strict justice is scarce ever observed in revenge), and not only to the enmity and hatred of the person injured, but of all others acquainted with the injury, at least all whose good opinion is worth preserving; and he forfeits that esteem of mankind, without which no man can be happy.

It may not be amiss, in this place, to reflect a little on the case of such as have worn out or conquered all that remorse, which generally and naturally seizes the human breast after a bad action: Now, besides that these persons cannot, for the future, enjoy the pleasure arising from the esteem and approbation of others, any more than
the

the much greater from their own; besides this, it deserves to be considered that a person hardened to this degree is as incapable of mental pleasure (which is always the greatest) as of mental pain; for had he that kind of sensibility, which makes us relish so exquisitely the highest and most rational delights, that very sensibility would as necessarily subject him to remorse on some occasions, as it would excite in him the extraordinary pleasure above-mentioned on others, and therefore might very probably deter him from immoral actions †; and he that would

† If we are capable of pleasure and pain in the same degree, and the circumstances producing both are equal, in that case the highest capacity for both would not be preferable to none at all, because they would destroy each other; as a pair of scales with no weights in either, or a very great but equal

part with this sensibility, in order to avoid remorse, ought to consider that he loses just so much capacity for pleasure. And if the approbation of that Being, who is supposed to be the cause of this order, be procured by the same means; can any consideration possibly have so much weight as this, that, in pursuing our own best interest, besides the securing it, we gain the esteem of all whom we esteem round about us, have the approbation of our own minds; and, above all, that of God

weight in both, is the same thing. But though it were true, that the highest capacity for the one, may include the same for the other; if it be also true (as is very apparent) that there is much more good than evil in the world, and many more opportunities and occasions of enjoyment, than of subjection to pain and misery, the balance will be strongly on the side of such relish or sensibility, though perhaps we have no idea of pleasure purely positive, and without opposing it to pain.

himself,

himself, and consequently must be as happy in this course of action, as our natures are capable of, and as long as we exist; and forfeit nothing for it, but what would render us miserable?

Whoever considers this whole affair, as it merits, must be determined in a moral conduct; and it is to be feared that the contrary doctrine, viz. that we are to give up the pleasures of this life, for the hopes of another, may have been attended with very bad consequences, especially with such as have doubted, or have not been fully persuaded, of a future state; though if it were true that religion demands this, then indeed a man ought to abandon every pleasure, during this short and uncertain life, that being then the only way to secure eternal happiness. But

In truth, whether religion be taken into the consideration or not, it is evident, from what has been represented, that, in order to be happy here, a man has no chance but that of virtue, which will also secure his future happiness. This is so far from weakening the cause of religion, that nothing can give so much strength to it; this is supposing God to treat us as children whom he loves, that he requires nothing of us but for our own sakes; not like a capricious Being, who demands penance and misery, as a condition of becoming happy.

Nothing has been said of public spirit, love to our country, and many other positive virtues, public or private; because from the above, it is plain, those will flow; that is, the
more

more virtuous a man becomes in all respects, the more happiness he will enjoy : if glory be a good, public virtues procure it ; if the love of mankind, benevolence will procure it ; charity, generosity, friendship, &c. all these have their rewards, besides that constant tranquillity and peace of mind, which none can have but the virtuous, and of which no power on earth can rob him.

It is needless to propose and answer objections ; such as that sometimes the greatest virtues produce not the effects that might be expected from them ; nay, on the contrary, procure envy, hatred, &c. But what is to be concluded from hence ? That vice is preferable to virtue ? No ! surely. For besides that this happens but very rarely,

rarely, and in very particular cases (as the objection supposes), when it does happen, the whole good effect is not lost; nothing is abated of that inward-conscious sense before-mentioned, nothing abated of the esteem of good men; perhaps, some extraordinary effects of goodness and friendship may be exerted by such, on occasions that demand them: must it not however still be confessed, that virtue is most likely to produce the best effects, and is the most probable natural means of happiness? That generally it does produce it, and that no other consistent course can be proposed, in which there is so much as a chance for happiness; at least, for so great a share of it, both internal and external?

A REFLECTION

A REFLECTION on reading COT-
TA'S Argument in C I C E R O.

WE must either conclude, according to the consequences of Cotta's argument, that there is no God ; or that, if there be, he is regardless of human affairs, and of virtue and vice, and that there is no moral distinction between them ; or that all rational as well as irrational creatures are under an uncontrollable necessity in all they do ; or that God is unjust.

Or, with the Stoics, that virtue is always its own reward, and vice its own punishment, even in this life.

Or else we must conclude with the Christians and some philosophers, that
there

there will be another life, after the present, in which virtue will meet with its full reward, and vice with its proper punishment.

And this seems most effectually to justify the providence of God, and to vindicate all his attributes, as well as to satisfy the reasonable expectations of mankind.

A MORAL

A MORAL SOLILOQUY.

ENJOY this day; for thou art in health, and no otherwise disqualified so to do, than thou hast been every former day of thy life, than thou wilt be every future day, than every other mortal is, has been, and will be; for who is, was, or will be, without hopes of some things considered as good, without fears of other things considered as evil? Who is there now in possession of all he has wished, and free from the apprehension of all he has feared? No mortal is, was, or ever will be, in such a state in this world. And, were it possible, it seems however impossible that even such a state should long afford happiness, if it were only
 3 from

from satiety. Some hopes and fears must and always will be kept alive, for exercise to our passions, which are the springs of action; and without which, we should languish in the worst state of a human creature, that is, a low-spirited melancholy.

Being then in the situation above described, that is, in health, and free from any immediate evil; it is wisdom, not to suffer either retrospect or prospect to prevent, disturb, or interrupt thy present tranquillity. Banish therefore all such anxiety, and useless solicitude, as would only disqualify thee for the proper business or enjoyment of this day, without advancing that of to-morrow, or any future. *Sufficient to the day, is the evil thereof*; and sufficient may also be

be the good thereof, if wisely husband-
ed.

If we can spend this day, in the same manner as we would have chosen, though in possession of the greatest estate; then we are in possession of such estate, or, which is the same thing, we enjoy all that could be procured by it for this day. And how many days have we had, and may still have, to spend with equal advantage; that is, in which wealth would make no alteration in our choice? All such days therefore so spent, would receive no additional happiness from the increase of it.

And since, next to health, the principal pursuit of almost all men is riches, it is well worth the most serious consideration, how little they can contribute
to.

to real happiness. With the greatest, thou canst eat but one dinner in a day, and enjoy the common conveniences of life. And when have these failed thee, for so many years past as thou hast hitherto lived? Why then so absurdly and ungratefully anxious for the future, which may be short, is uncertain, and cannot be very long?

Be prudent, therefore, and make the most of what remains for thyself, and those most intimately connected with thee, in the first place; and next, for whomsoever thou mayest esteem; and lastly, for all to whose happiness or relief thou art inclined, from friendship, humanity, or charity, to contribute. For neither can we, nor are we, required, by any obligations, to do more than our circumstances and situation
may

may enable us to do: and those in the greatest affluence cannot relieve all. So that there are bounds or limits in every station.

The conclusion of the whole is, that though we ought not to neglect any pursuits, that reason or religion may suggest, yet, consistently with all such pursuits, we may and ought to suppress and repel all unnecessary cares and anxieties; and to encourage and cultivate in ourselves a disposition to relish and enjoy, with complacency and gratitude, the blessings which are actually in our possession.

AN ARGUMENT OF EPICURUS,
quoted by LACTANTIUS*.

“ **G**OD is either willing to remove
 “ evils, and not able ; or able,
 “ and not willing ; or neither willing,
 “ nor able ; or both willing and able.
 “ If he is willing, but not able, he is
 “ weak ; which is inconsistent with the
 “ notion of God. If he is able, but
 “ not willing, he is envious ; which is
 “ no less foreign to the nature of God.
 “ If he is neither willing nor able, he
 “ is both envious and weak ; and, con-
 “ sequently, no God.

“ If he is both willing and able,
 “ (which is alone suitable to God),

* De irâ Dei, Cap. 13.

“ from

“ from whence did evils arise ; or why
 “ does he not remove them ?”

A N S W E R.

I cannot conceive, that a Being infinitely powerful, wise, and good, can produce creatures, or even one creature, the terms of whose existence necessarily subject him to more misery than happiness, because that would be creating him to be miserable ; which is inconsistent with the idea of these perfections. If, therefore, any such creature exists, he must be produced by a Being, who wants one of these attributes ; for if he intended to make him happy, the maker wanted wisdom to contrive, or power to execute it ; if

he did not intend to make him happy, he wanted goodness.

But I suppose that there is no such creature, and that the question is without foundation ; that all appearances tend to prove not only the much greater moment of good upon the whole, but also to each individual, especially if, after observing the high probability, that the much greater number enjoy more happiness, than they suffer misery, it be farther thought reasonable to conclude, that the few, which seem to us unhappy, may, notwithstanding, be far otherwise ; therefore, by analogy, it is more probable, that the whole is as we perceive the far greater part to be ; and indeed we have no other argument, *a posteriori*, to conclude the Deity to be infinitely wise, powerful, and good ; but that

that we see so many more and greater marks of wisdom, power, and goodness, than of the contrary, or of the want of them ; concluding very fairly, that if such imperfect Beings are sensible of so much, the not perceiving all is only a proof that we are imperfect.

For illustration of the above reasoning, I may add, that we know many, who, though they possess health, wealth, and all those other advantages, the want of which we suppose to render others so unhappy, are yet very far from enjoying that happiness, which these things are presumed naturally to produce ; and, *vice versa*, many others, who, with a very small portion of these, are chearful and happy ; which is mentioned, by the way, to shew how

little some outward appearances are to be depended on, and how liable we are to mistakes, when we know not with great exactness all particulars; which we very seldom do.

It may perhaps be asked, " Why any
 " evil at all? Why not the same quan-
 " tity of good without this allay?
 " For if it could have been so ordered,
 " it would certainly have been chosen by
 " a Being infinitely good, and wanting
 " neither power nor wisdom". It must
 therefore necessarily be, that this was
 impossible in the nature of things;
 that is, it was impossible to produce a
 world, with such various orders of crea-
 tures, who should be capable of enjoy-
 ing, and who should actually enjoy, so
 much happiness, as they now are capa-
 ble of, or do enjoy, or shall enjoy,
 without

without this mixture of what we call evil; for we cannot reconcile it to the idea of infinite goodness, to suffer evil that could be avoided, but by supposing that the greater good could not possibly be otherwise produced or procured. For it is even better to imagine the eternity of matter, and that, from its original nature, the best system that could possibly be composed must necessarily be subject to what we call evil, than to suppose the Deity to be deficient in wisdom, power, or goodness: and it is easy to conceive that power, though infinite, cannot effect impossibilities or contradictions; and such, for aught we know, would be involved in the supposition of a world for imperfect Beings, not subject to certain imperfections.

ON RICHES and POVERTY.

THE difference, in point of happiness, between the rich and the poor, will appear on reflection to be much less than is generally imagined, and in many respects the advantage is on the side of the poor, supposing these latter above penury; for the term *poor* is here used merely in opposition to the term *rich*.

And 1st, both are equally liable to the greatest miseries, and both equally capable of the greatest pleasures. Riches will not secure from bodily pains, diseases or accidents, and the tooth-ach, for instance, is as easily borne at least by a poor man, as by a rich; and so of any other unavoidable evil. Generally

rally indeed the poor bear them better, and account them less evils. The same may be said of all ordinary calamities, which are common to both, felt more sensibly by the rich, and endured more patiently by the poor.

The cares and anxieties of life are fewer among the poor than the rich. On the contrary, the common enjoyments are to the full as great, and generally better relished by the poor than rich. These have not more pleasure than those at their repasts, how different soever their food may be. Nor do the rich sleep more soundly, or dream more pleasantly, on beds of down, in elegant chambers, than the poor on floors, in mean apartments. The latter are free from the concern and trouble of dress and appearance, which occasion

occasion no small inquietude to the former, besides the much greater of complaisance, of formal visitings, troublesome ceremonies and observances, which constantly attend their situation, consume much of their time, and prevent them, in a great measure, from leading the lives they would otherwise chuse, especially such of them as think more rationally, and are capable of intellectual pleasures. Whereas those in a lower station may live more agreeably to nature and reason, and may, at their leisure, enjoy and amuse themselves their own way, without controul; and many of these latter have had as good educations, as many of the former; but if not, yet natural parts and genius are common to all ranks.

Add

Add to all this, that, as the lower classes of mankind are generally obliged to rise earlier, and, for that reason, are in the habit of going earlier to rest (which course is not interrupted by late visitants, as in the higher classes), so, in consequence of this natural regularity, they have generally better health, better spirits, and are much less subject to cronical diseases.

It is not pretended as a consequence, that it would be always eligible to exchange a higher station, in which a person has been bred, for a lower; though instances are not wanting of such, who, having been so reduced, though at first they thought themselves extremely miserable by that exchange, have nevertheless been soon convinced, that there was nothing in the transition,

so

so dreadful as they apprehended ; and some such have not only confessed, but pronounced and declared, that they had never been so happy in the former part of their lives, as in these latter circumstances, with only mere necessaries ; and that they now enjoyed greater liberty with less anxiety, and a fuller power of spending their time as they chose, unsubjected to the observations, and humours, and controul of others.

Again, on the other hand, those who have been advanced by fortune to higher ranks, whatever agreeable expectations they had formed, or how great soever were the first transports of joy on the acquisition, have very soon been convinced, that a proportionable increase of happiness was more in imagination than reality ; and that when
they

they were settled in their new state, and it became habitual, it was no way preferable to the former, but in several respects less eligible; that their time was less at their own command, as being now obliged to comply with new and inconvenient customs, and also that by indolence and satiety (almost the constant attendants of an affluent fortune and high life) they had less real taste for, and satisfaction in, any of these enjoyments; which, how desirable soever they appeared when beyond their reach, these circumstances rendered common because easily obtained.

The truth is, that in proportion as the necessaries and conveniences of life are more really and substantially valuable, than any superfluities whatsoever; so the acquisition of these necessaries and conveniences

conveniences to him who wanted them, will afford, in the same proportion, more solid and lasting satisfaction, than the acquisition of superfluities to him who coveted them; besides that the former are within the compass of nature and reason, have their periodical uses, and consequently never satiate, but are enjoyed with a returning appetite.

There is however a proper medium, between poverty and riches, which is preferable to either in many respects; and principally as such a state is best suited to the purposes of virtue and of happiness; and though great latitude must be allowed according to the rank, family, education, profession, and connections of each individual; yet, there will be (in the nature and reason of things) such a proportion as is fittest for

for every one, and may be termed a competency; above or below which would be less eligible.

*Est modus in rebus, sunt certi denique
fines,*

*Quos ultra citraque nequit consistere
reſum.* HOR.

“ Give me neither poverty nor riches, but

“ feed me with food convenient for me.”

Prov. And how difficult soever it may be to ascertain the bounds for any one, it by no means follows that there are no bounds; nor indeed is it necessary, in considering this subject, to be precisely exact; it is sufficient, that our demands and desires be within some reasonable compass: and in order to facilitate such calculations, it will be proper

proper to examine, first, the lowest state in which a man may be said to be above extreme poverty.

By this lowest state, is not meant the lowest class, but that condition in each which approaches nearest to what may be deemed poverty in such class. Thus a day-labourer, with health, though obliged to work constantly, yet if able and employed, may be said to be above extreme poverty, and this whether single, or having a family, if he and they, or he for them, can provide sufficient and convenient food, raiment and lodging, and especially if not reduced from a higher to this condition, but having been bred and inured to it. One step lower would be indigence; that is, if he be disabled by sickness, or otherwise, wants employment, or if his family

mily be too numerous, for the joint labour of those who are able to procure the above necessaries.

Again, in one of the highest classes, that of a nobleman or gentleman, the lowest state will be such, wherein, with the utmost prudence and œconomy, expences necessary to support his rank are barely within his rents. Less would either sink him to a kind of penury, or oblige him to be dependent ; and so, by analogy, may all the intermediate classes be considered in their respective lowest states. And from the highest class to the meanest, there is also a state, which may be considered as opulent for each ; for a man may be counted rich in one class, who with the same portion of wealth would be esteemed indigent in another.

Having thus explained what is intended by riches and poverty, the medium in each class is by such kind of considerations easily adjusted, at least sufficiently for the present argument. To return, therefore, it is asserted that such a medium, or moderate competency, is preferable to either extreme; and not only so, but the intermediate classes themselves are generally preferable to the extreme classes: for fact and experience have long shewn, that both virtue and happiness are to be found in a much more eminent degree among these.

Or, if the consideration of the several classes, into which mankind are divided, be waved as too particular; it may however, in general, be affirmed, that he who is in possession of that which produces

duces an income sufficient to procure the common necessaries and conveniences of life, has all that money can contribute towards happiness, for himself as an individual. And what is here said of an individual, is to be understood equally of families and dependents; for since a man, whether a prince or a peasant, eats but one dinner in a day, if he have 5, or 500 in family, each demands no more; and so of all other necessaries and conveniences, for no one can properly be said to enjoy that which is not actually expended for his use. And as to magnificence, gaming, expensive pleasures, and extravagant pursuits, these have no bounds; nor can a limited revenue be assigned for such purposes, as have no regular plan for their founda-

tion. But acts of generosity, beneficence, and charity, will demand extraordinary expences ; and for these wealth is truly desirable. But all that can properly be offered on this part of the subject is, that every one should proportion his extraordinary expences, to what he can well spare, after provision made for the more immediately necessary demands ; for no man can be generous or charitable, till he has first satisfied all the claims of justice.

Now if a man has an estate of 20,000*l.* a year, and lives within the expence of 5000*l.* including all his acts of generosity, charity, &c. it is most evident, that 5000*l.* is sufficient for all his purposes, except what may providently and reasonably be reserved for his family, friends, and for unforeseen contingencies :

tingencies : and a philosopher will deem him worth no more ; for all the rest is as useless to him, as if it were another's ; it might indeed as well be at the bottom of the sea, as in his coffers : what is never employed, cannot add to his happiness ; though it may to his misery, from the apprehension of losing it, and the solicitude and anxious concern to increase it. Hence these wretches have been justly named misers.

Perfect happiness is not the lot of human nature, at least in this state. If it were, and the means known, it would be wise and laudable, to expect and pursue it by such means. Of these, wealth is generally esteemed the principal, and therefore sought more ardently than all other things ; the insufficiency of which, however, is most

apparent, from the many who are miserable in the midst of abundance, and with the largest possessions. Even Solomon, who had united in himself all that could contribute to human felicity, or has ever been counted desirable, such as health, beauty, wisdom, immense riches, power, dignity, the esteem and love of mankind in the highest degree, the means and inclination to gratify every passion, and the actual gratification of them to the utmost, yet even he complains of the vanity and misery of human life: and who can (with the least appearance of reason) expect to be happy in this world, if he was not? *Whatsoever mine eyes desired (saith he) I kept not from them, I withheld not my heart from any joy; for my heart rejoiced in all my labour, and this was*

was my portion of all my labour. Then I looked on all the works that my hands had wrought, and on the labour that I had laboured to do; and behold, all was vanity and vexation of spirit, and there was no profit under the sun.—Then I said in my heart, as it happeneth to the fool, so it happeneth even to me; and why was I then more wise? Then I said in my heart, that this also is vanity.—Therefore I bated life, because the work that is wrought under the sun is grievous unto me; for all is vanity and vexation of spirit.—Therefore I went about, to cause my heart to despair of all the labour, which I took under the sun.—For what hath man of all his labour, and of the vexation of his heart, wherein he hath laboured under the sun? For all his days are sorrows, and his travel grief; yea, his heart taketh not rest in the night. This

also is vanity. There is nothing better for a man, than that he should eat and drink, and that he should make his soul enjoy good in his labour. This also I saw, that it was from the hand of God*. So that, according to Solomon, there is no enjoyment, but in the common and ordinary conveniences of life; and all beyond them, is vanity and vexation of spirit. Again I considered all travel, and for every right work, that for this a man is envied of his neighbour. This is also vanity and vexation of spirit.—Better is an handful with quietness, than both the hands full with travel and vexation of spirit†. He that loveth silver, shall not be satisfied with silver; nor he that loveth abundance, with increase.--When goods increase,--what good is there to the owners thereof, saving the

* Eccl. ii. 10.—25. † iv. 4. 6.

beholding of them with their eyes? The sleep of a labouring man is sweet, whether he eat little or much; but the abundance of the rich will not suffer him to sleep. Better is little with the fear of the Lord, than great treasure, and trouble therewith. Better is a dinner of herbs where love is, than a stalled ox, and hatred therewith†.*

The opinion of Solomon is founded on the largest personal experience, that ever man had of temporal blessings, as well as on his observations drawn from the conditions of others, and amounts to this in general; that all externals together cannot insure happiness to mortals, much less riches alone; that contentment, which is all that can reasonably be expected, is seated in the mind, and depends principally on our

* Eccl. v. 11, 12.

† Prov. xv, 17, 18.

own conduct, and may be attained with more probability in a lower or moderate state, than in the most exalted.

In short, food, cloathing, lodging, the means of conveyance from one place to another, of enjoying the conversation we prefer, of reading such authors as our improvement or amusement may require, and such other conveniences of life as reason and nature generally suggest; all these, so far as they contribute to substantial enjoyment, are within the compass of a very moderate fortune; and, with an estate, or income, sufficient to supply the above reasonable demands, a truly wise man will be content: but this will not prevent his endeavouring to improve it, by all honest means; and especially with a view to extend his good offices,

to

to which every worthy man is so strongly inclined, that all increase of power to exercise these, is so much increase of happiness. But whatever acquisition of fortune he makes, either by his own industry, or otherwise, this will never be employed, in adding to the number of his domestics, or to the pomp of his equipage, in ostentatiously enlarging his manner of living, or in that kind of fashionable dissipation, by which his fortune, and, what is still more precious, his time, will be fruitlessly wasted; but will employ both to nobler ends, his own proper improvement, to rational pleasures, and principally, to the greatest of all, that of relieving and comforting the indigent, the distressed, and the deserving; than which no greater pleasure was ever enjoyed

joyed by the human mind, and is preferable to all others in this material circumstance, that it ceases not with the act, but is enjoyed over again by reflection, and leaves a permanent satisfaction.

When we consider the various distresses of our fellow-creatures, sickness, extreme poverty, imprisonment, the apprehension and dread of it, families and friends of these involved with them, &c. from the possibility of which none are exempt, not we ourselves, how different soever may be our present situation ; what exquisite joy is it to be unexpectedly relieved from these calamities ? And can it be less to those, who, with a compassionate sense of them, administer to their relief ? The heart of man is peculiarly formed for this kind
of

of gratification; of which every one is (more or less) sensible, who is not immersed in sensuality, in pleasurable amusements, puffed up with pride, or too much involved in the business of the world; or, which is worst of all, contracted with avarice, the last and most incorrigible of all vices, and which renders the heart impenetrable, not only to every virtue, but to every feeling of humanity.

He, therefore, whose present fortune enables him to lead the life he chuses, enjoys all that riches can procure for himself, considered separately; and with this he has reason to be content: but indeed no man can, or ought so to consider himself; he is a social Being, and necessarily connected with society; and there are so many occasions continually

tinually presenting themselves to his notice, wherein he may be serviceable to his fellow-creatures, that it is impossible he should be happy alone; he cannot be an unconcerned spectator of the calamities of others, some of whom also must, by nature, alliance, friendship, acquaintance, or other connections, be more peculiarly entitled to his regard. These considerations will not only justify him in endeavouring to augment his fortune (as was said above) but will oblige him to it, at least so far as may be consistent with his health, and the reasonable enjoyment of that portion, which providence has allotted him.

But it will be true, notwithstanding, that, in general, a medium between poverty and riches is preferable to
 either

either extreme ; in all views, and for all purposes. As for poverty, this not only renders a man unable to assist others, but even to enjoy himself, and subjects him to great temptations, as well as sufferings, which Agur suggests in these words ; *lest I be poor, and steal, and take the name of my God in vain.* But it is needless to add any thing on this extreme, to which there is no danger that any one should give the preference. It is more difficult to convince men, that riches do not procure happiness ; and yet it is certain, that they do not ; for it is notorious in fact, that the most wealthy are not the most happy ; whereas, on the contrary supposition, they must be so in proportion to their riches. But it is so far otherwise, that many of these are miserable, and the
more

more on account of their riches ; some by avarice, wholly occasioned by extraordinary acquisitions, who were neither avaricious, nor unhappy, before such acquisitions ; and it must be allowed, that a covetous man is incapable either of enjoying himself, or promoting the felicity of others. Some again, on the other hand, by the excess of luxury and debauchery, have lost the relish of those very pleasures, in which they have indulged themselves, by satiety, which is the least evil ; for with this also, many have broken their constitutions, procured diseases, and shortened their lives : besides that these courses and habits have rendered them insensible to the wants of their fellow-creatures ; corrupted their minds, hardened their hearts, and destroyed the sympathising

sympathising tenderness of humanity. And those who are neither covetous, nor debauched, are however for the most part so engrossed by the prevalent customary modes of dissipation among the great, as to have little leisure for reflection, and less disposition to attend to the distresses of those below them; seldom descend enough to be in the way of application, from such as most need, and most deserve relief, and assistance; the humble and the modest cannot approach them. Grandeur, attendants, and idle, pampered, saucy domestics render them almost inaccessible. If there are some few among the very rich, who are really the happier, and the more beneficent, in proportion to their riches, yet how few are these compared to the rest, whose number affords

abundant reason for the other part of Agur's prayer, *Give me not riches, lest I be full, and deny thee, and say, who is the Lord?* But those of a middle state have not the temptations of either extreme, are not placed too high to see and observe the calamities of their neighbours, nor too far removed to think themselves liable to the like, nor yet so low as to be unable to communicate. And every man's and every day's experience confirms the observation, that this rank has not only the best chance for virtue and contentment; but also, that, though they have not so much to bestow, as those who are more wealthy, yet, as they are generally more disposed, so they actually bestow more: therefore it is preferable to any other; and though the extraordinary characters of a small
part

part of those in the highest life, and most affluent circumstances, may shew that virtue is not utterly incompatible with riches, yet these examples are so rare, and the contrary so general, as to evince the great danger of being possessed of them.

A F R A G M E N T.

*** How few have either natural or acquired abilities, or are in a situation to judge for themselves? The bulk of mankind are, have always been, and necessarily must be, led or directed.

What is called *the universal consent of mankind* is nothing, there is no such thing; a very few influencing multitudes, even without their perceiving it.

This nation is Christian, not because the unprejudiced sentiments of all the people are such, but because the government is Christian; the people would have been of any other religion, if established, as they were in former ages, in this same country.

But

But the religion of every man who thinks, and examines for himself, is something peculiar and personal, and cannot depend on any received opinions.

An honest man will be always open to conviction, and perhaps no such has been, throughout his life, of the same opinion without any doubts, or variation; and, if so, it may have happened to the wisest, and best, to have changed their opinions, even more than once in their lives; this is known to have been true of some such, by their own confession; and as in each opinion they embraced, they thought themselves right, at the time; so if at any particular period they had died, they would have died in the sentiments of that period, though it

happened that they out-lived it, and changed their opinions; but in whatsoever sentiments an honest man dies, his state, hereafter, will be the same; for it must be as true as God is just, that all, who, with *equal* sincerity, endeavour to render themselves acceptable to the Deity, will be *equally* accepted of him.

There is no manner of doubt, but the generality of mankind are satisfied with much less evidence than is necessary for the establishment of truth; nay are satisfied with such kind and degree, as might be had for a forgery. And this is apparent from fact; for all men are of the religion of their several countries, and always were: and though we Christians know that there is but one religion true, viz. our own, and that

all

all the rest are false, as were formerly all but the Jewish, yet it is by accident (with respect to us) that we are Christians: had we been born in a former age in this very country, or in the present age in some distant country, we should have been of a different religion. And can we suppose, that, if this had been our lot, not our fault; and that with the same integrity of heart, as at present, we had embraced and practised a religion which we thought the purest and most agreeable to the Deity, any thing more could possibly be required of us? * * *

END OF VOL. I.

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